Hafa Adai!

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
New Year's Eve celebration: Eat out or stay in?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

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The NMC Foundation has awarded scholarships to six Northern Marianas College students.

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Bodies Found
A Philippine diver found at least 12 bodies inside the wreckage of a ferry that sank on Christmas Eve.

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Knife Fight
Charlie Sheen's wife said the actor put a knife to her throat and threatened to kill her.

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Hotel occupancy at 49 pct. in November. PAGE 2
PSS gets $45M in total federal grants in 2009. PAGE 5

19,000-plus alien workers register with Ombudsman

Brown says no need for registration extension

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Brown

An estimated 19,000-plus alien workers and those with Immediate Relative status participated in the Office of the Federal Ombudsman's "accounting" process, which ended yesterday after a 16-day run.

In response to a *Saipan Tribune* inquiry, Ombudsman Pamela Brown disclosed that as of Monday, over 18,000 alien workers in the CNMI have filed registration forms and her office expects around 1,500 more to be

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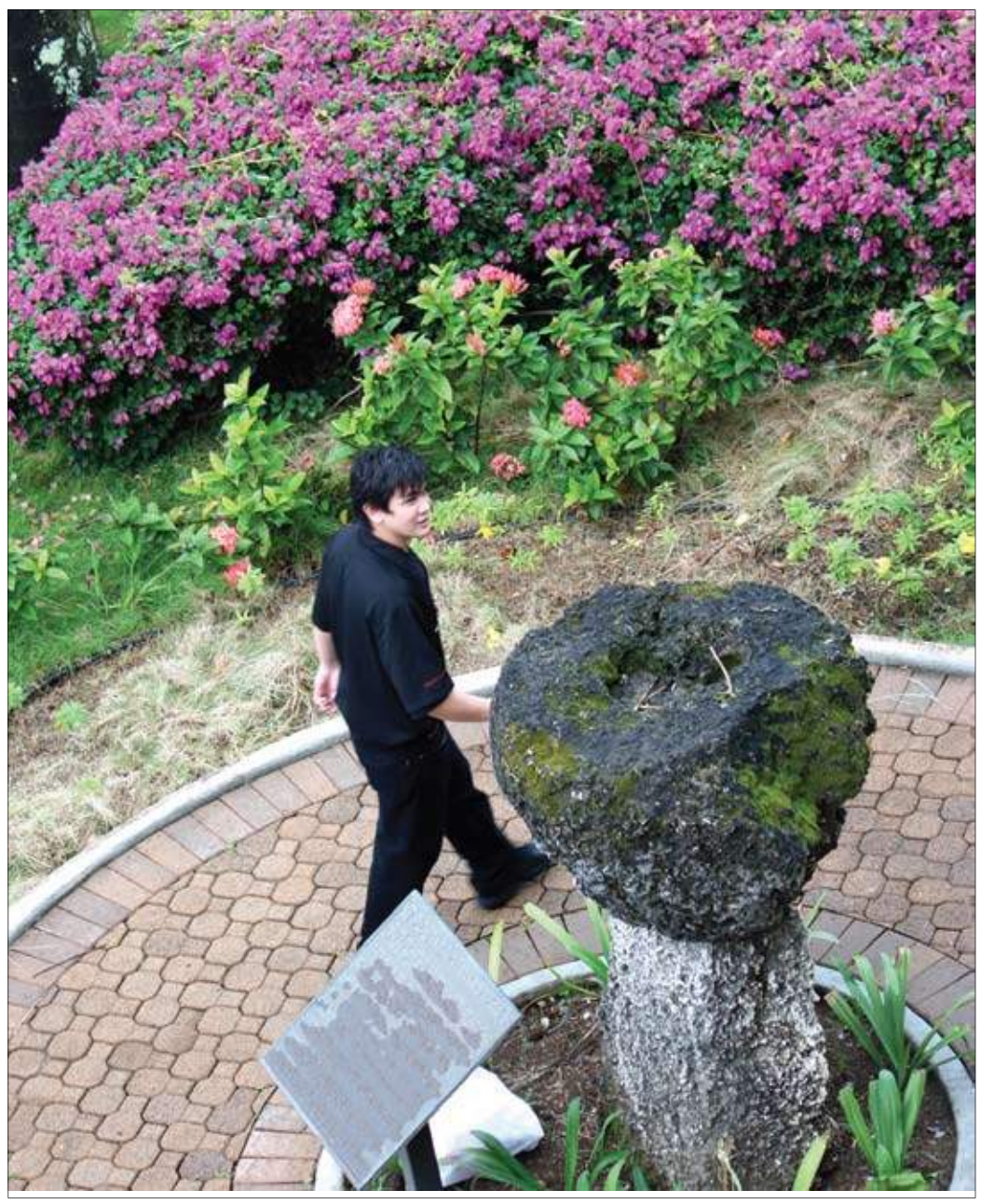

CULTURAL GEM HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
A man walks past a latte stone right beside the DFS Galleria in Garapan. Latte stones are found only on Saipan, Tinian, Rota and Guam, and were used by ancient Chamorro people as foundation of their houses to keep them off the ground in case of flooding. They were made to withstand typhoons and winds. In modern times, the latte stone or stone pillar is seen as a sign of Chamorro identity and is used in many different contexts.

Froilan says 17th House will pass balanced FY10 budget

OAG says new initiative to take effect in FY 2011

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Tenorio

Incoming 17th House Speaker and former governor Froilan C. Tenorio yesterday said he will make sure a balanced Fiscal Year 2010 budget will be passed, adding that he does not "quite agree" with an interpretation that a "balanced budget" should be achieved by FY 2011 and not FY 2010, to comply with a legislative initiative ratified in the Nov. 7 general elections.

House Legislative Initiative 16-11 prohibits withdrawal of any funds from

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ARRA accountability, transparency pushed

RFPs for service contracts, new jobs available

Fitial

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

ON THE NET
www.cnmiarra.net

New job openings and requests for proposals for services related to projects funded via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are currently posted

See ARRA on Page 4

Local

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Hotel occupancy at 49 pct. in November

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands reported a 49 percent occupancy rate among its 13 member hotels for November 2009, a 13-percent drop compared to November 2008.

A total of 39,450 of the 81,450 available room nights were sold in November, compared to 50,303 of 82,380 available room nights sold over the same period last year.

Room rates also dipped slightly from $89.34 last year to $86.39 in November 2009.

"November was quite hard on hotel occupancy due to low travel demand, as less than half our rooms were sold during the month," said HANMI chair Nick Nishikawa.

"While we are looking forward to a strong holiday season from now through January, there is a critical need for more Northern Marianas tourism promotions in 2010 to sustain the industry," added Nishikawa. "More strategic promotions in our target markets will be necessary."

So far this year, hotel occupancy is at an average 58 percent, compared to 62 percent over the same period last year. Five years ago, occupancy averaged 72 percent.

In other news, HANMI members re-elected Aqua Resort Club GM Hiroki Sugie, Pacific Islands Club Saipan GM Kieran Daly, and Saipan Grand Hotel GM Ed Cho to its board of directors last Dec. 22. Continuing their term on the board are chairman and Hyatt Regency Saipan GM Nick Nishikawa, vice chairman and Fiesta Resort & Spa GM B.K. Park, and treasurer and Deloitte Touche managing partner Mike Johnson.

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands was established in 1985 as a professional forum for the hospitality industry of the Northern Mariana Islands. ***(HANMI)***

Suspected 'ice' trafficker gets more time to prepare for trial

The federal court has vacated the scheduled Jan. 5 jury trial of a man suspected of being a member of an "ice" trafficking organization in Tanapag to allow him to prepare for his trial.

U.S. District Court for the NMI designated judge David Wiseman announced the cancellation of the original jury trial date of Roque Norita and set the new trial to March 1, 2010.

Wiseman ordered Norita to appear in court on Jan. 6 at 8am for a status conference.

Norita, through counsel Bruce Berline, told the court that he needed more time to prepare for trial.

Attorney G. Anthony Long, counsel for Norita's co-defendant Julita Sablan, also asked that the Jan. 5 trial be taken off calendar until his client is available for the proceeding.

Norita and Sablan pleaded not guilty to the indictment on Dec. 3. The two waived their right to a speedy trial.

CNMI/Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force agents believe they dismantled a methamphetamine or "ice" trafficking organization in Tanapag with the September arrest of "ice" supplier Sablan and her alleged couriers, Norita and Inos F. Germinaro.

DEA special agent Daniel G. Holcomb stated in his report that Sablan, Germinaro, and Norita, conspired to distribute "ice" from August 2008 through July 28, 2009. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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CPA panel junks PAS bid protest

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

An appeals committee formed by the Commonwealth Ports Authority board has affirmed the decision of the CPA management on a contract for the Saipan International Airport's public address system, dismissing a complaint filed by losing bidder.

In a six-page document obtained by *Saipan Tribune*, the panel said that Marianas Wireless Cable had submitted a proposal that was more than four times the cost submitted by the winning bidder, RadioCom.

Marianas Wireless's proposal, in addition, was couched in the form of two bids and the alternative bid was for $733,379, which is still more than three times the cost of the RadioCom proposal.

"The procurement process is intended to result in a benefit to the CPA because it obtains the most advantageous proposal using the sealed proposal process. The executive director made a decision that was largely based on cost. This is not inconsistent with the RFP nor with the language of the CPA procurement regulations, which emphasize the cost consideration," the committee stated.

CPA received seven bids for the project, ranging from $204,432 to $921,817. The lowest proposal was submitted by RadioCom while the highest was by Marianas Wireless Cable, which submitted two bids: $921,817 and an alternative cost of $733,379 for a different equipment. The remaining five proposals ranged in cost from $249,960 to $323,405.

The appeals committee affirmed then-executive director Efrain Camacho's move to consider price and evaluation factors declared in the RFP to name the winning contractor.

"In these trying economic times, it is even more understandable why the regulations place a separate and strong emphasis on the price factor," the committee stated, adding that Marianas Wireless Cable submitted no evidence to corroborate its allegation that Camacho's decision was biased.

Marianas Wireless earlier described as "flawed" and "illegal" the decision to award the PAS project to RadioCom by merely basing the decision on price.

The panel also said that Marianas Wireless did not provide specific facts as to why it believes that RadioCom is not qualified or less qualified, nor why MWC is more qualified than any other bidders to perform the contract.

The appeals committee was headed by board vice chair Thomas Villagomez. Its members included Fermin Sakisat, Margarita Prater, and Benigno Sablan.

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6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
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Starting 9:00 pm
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January 1, 2010
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IN BATTLE AMONG TINIAN POLITICIANS

Judge explains denial of injunction in transfer of employees

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge Ramona V. Manglona explained in a written decision yesterday that she denied the request for a preliminary injunction requested by some Tinian politicians because they failed to show that they will suffer irreparable injury without it.

In a five-page order, Manglona ruled that Tinian mayor-elect Ramon M. Dela Cruz and his co-plaintiffs failed to show the probability that, without a preliminary injunctive relief, they will suffer irreparable injury or that the hardships faced by the parties merit the issuance of the injunction.

Dela Cruz and the winners in the Nov. 7 election for the positions in the Senate and House had asked for the preliminary injunction to prevent incumbent Tinian official from performing certain official actions pending the determination of a lawsuit they filed against the incumbents.

Among others, Dela Cruz and his group wanted to stop the incumbent officials from going ahead with a $1 million loan from the Marianas Public Land Trust. They also wanted to stop the conversion of current municipal employees to civil service status.

"If plaintiffs are successful, the interim continuation of the conversion process and the undoing of its results would arguably involve some waste of administrative resources, but this possibility does not amount to an irreparable injury to plaintiffs," Manglona pointed out.

She said the relief requested by plaintiffs will remain fully available and they will suffer no prejudice to their rights if the court does not issue the injunction.

Manglona said if the plaintiffs prevail in their claim for declaratory relief, this will invalidate and nullify the purported conversion of municipal employees to civil service status.

"The administrative processing of these transfers may or may not proceed to completion during the pendency of this action, but the officials, agencies and employees involved are aware that they are proceeding under the present cloud of plaintiffs' legal challenge," the judge said.

Dela Cruz's co-plaintiffs are Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider, senator-elect Francisco Q. Cruz, and representative-elect Trenton B. Connor.

They are suing outgoing Tinian Mayor Jose San Nicolas, outgoing Tinian Sen. Joseph Mendiola, Tinian Sen. Henry San Nicolas, outgoing Tinian Rep. Edwin P. Aldan, and the Office of the Mayor of Tinian & Aguiguan.

The plaintiffs sued the defendants for breach of fiduciary duty and sought the order stopping the defendants from doing the following:

■ Pursuing a loan application with the MPLT on behalf of the Municipality of Tinian as authorized by Tinian Local Ordinance 16-02.

■ Making any realignment, reassignment, re-appointment, and repositioning of existing employees of the Municipality of Tinian to other departments or division, as well as appointment of new employees.

■ From reprogramming municipal funds.

■ From entering into any unusual, non-regular, and non-recurring business contracts involving the use of funds, resources, and revenue of the Municipality of Tinian.

Moot

Prior to the hearing, the parties presented to the court an agreement between the plaintiffs and the remaining defendants, Sen. Joseph M. Mendiola and Mayor Jose San Nicolas, to stay the municipality's application for a loan from MPLT.

The parties agreed that the issue of the MPLT loan application is now moot.

Plaintiffs currently seek only to preliminarily restrain defendants from completing the appointments, re-appointments, transfers or repositioning of Tinian municipal employees, particularly the transfer of employees to civil service status.

In denying the motion, Manglona said the plaintiffs' likelihood of success on the merits of their claims is difficult to measure from what has so far been presented to the court because of their failure to submit a legal memorandum in support of their initial motion as required, as well as their failure to file any responsive legal brief to defendants' opposition.

The judge said arguments raised by plaintiffs, such as the expiration of Public Law 16-32 (transfer of employees to civil service status) on Sept. 30, 2009 and the effect of a continuing resolution on its status, were not fully briefed.

She noted that plaintiffs cited no additional legal grounds for alleged violations that were not alleged in the complaint.

Furthermore, Manglona said, despite the admission by the Tinian Mayor's Office that on Dec. 2, 2009, it executed 124 requests for personnel actions and that there is no further action required by the Mayor's Office on this matter, plaintiffs nevertheless assert that an injunction is still necessary against the Mayor's Office rather than any other entity or individual.

"Given that the civil service rules and regulations are applied by the Office of the Personnel Management, any allegation of an actual violation of the civil service regulations antecedently requires for its factual foundation that OPM has actually approved the transaction without any legal basis," she added.

Dotts earlier told *Saipan Tribune* they may file an amended complaint.

19,000

From Page 1

submitted yesterday, the last day of the "accounting" process.

Brown stressed that there will be no extension in the submission of registration forms since the response has been so positive.

"There have been no problems with our process," said the ombudsman in an e-mail to *Saipan Tribune* yesterday.

The Office of the Federal Ombudsman began the "accounting" process on Dec. 14 and has been doing it with the help of some volunteers from 4pm to 12 midnight daily.

The Ombudsman, however, accommodated even those who came before the 4pm regular schedule. The staff and volunteers also assisted the workers regardless of their schedule to appear for registration. Some businesses or employers also submitted the registration forms for their employees. As a result, the "accounting" process was fast and easy for alien workers.

The registrations on Tinian and Rota were completed on Dec. 11 and 12 respectively.

Dekada Movement counsel Stephen Woodruff had earlier cautioned alien workers who have no "umbrella permits" against participating in the Ombudsman's "accounting" process, saying these workers could be setting themselves up as targets for deportation.

Despite the warning, many alien workers, particularly those who have been in the CNMI for many years now, were excited to register with the Ombudsman, hoping they would be given an improved immigration status.

In her earlier public notice, Brown explained that this accounting process is based on Public Law 110-229 (the federalization law),which requires the U.S. Department of the Interior to report to the U.S. Congress the total number of aliens within the Commonwealth.

Brown said the federalization law further orders DOI to make recommendations to the U.S. Congress about what to do with the long-term status of aliens who were physically present in the CNMI on Nov. 28, 2009.

The accounting process came on the heels of the issuance of umbrella permits by the CNMI Department of Labor to thousands of alien workers and those with IR status between Oct. 26 and Nov. 27, 2009. The "umbrella permits" were intended to stabilize these workers' presence in the Commonwealth in the next two years.

Labor Deputy Secretary Cinta Kaipat had said that they completed the issuance of "umbrella permits" to approximately 96 percent of foreign workers who were eligible. Kaipat was not specific as to the total number of permits issued.

FROILAN

From Page 1

the general fund except by appropriations, and suspends the salaries of the governor and lawmakers if they fail to pass a balanced and timely budget.

Teresa Kim, the interim press secretary, said yesterday that there has been no written opinion issued on the matter of HLI 16-11, but said the Office of the Attorney General is aware of the conclusion that the initiative's effect will begin with the start of a new fiscal year rather than during a fiscal year.

"While there has not been a written opinion issued, the position of this office is that an ex post facto application would be an inappropriate conclusion. Further, giving the initiative effect on its first full year (beginning in October 2010) is consistent with proper construction and will afford all involved policymakers adequate time for review and planning," said Kim, who is also legal counsel for Lt. Gov. Eloy S. Inos.

Tenorio, who ran in the Nov. 7 general elections under the Covenant Party—years after he served as a Democrat governor in 1994 to 1998—said he looks forward to serving as the House speaker beginning on Jan. 11.

"We will have a balanced 2010 budget. I do not quite agree with the interpretation that the initiative requires a balanced budget by 2011 and not 2010. But I have yet to sit down with the attorney general on this," he told *Saipan Tribune*.

With a Covenant administration and a House dominated by Covenant members, Tenorio expressed confidence that a balanced budget is easier to attain.

Rep. Ray N. Yumul (R-Saipan), the current chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said the Republicans—although the minority in the 17th Legislature in January—will work with the Covenant House leadership to pass the 2010 budget.

"That's our No. 1 obligation, No. 1 duty as a Legislature—to pass a balanced budget," Yumul said yesterday.

Yumuls' FY 2010 budget bill identified budgetary resources of $162.820 million, which the Senate agreed to.

But while the House bill pegs the appropriations at $150,288,886, the Senate amended it to $154,418,886 and included austerity measures like a 16-hour cut in government work hours per pay period to help reduce the projected deficit of $15.3 million in FY 2010.

The House and the Senate were deadlocked on the FY 2010 budget.

The Joint Conference Committee formed to address the deadlock was dissolved during its first meeting on Dec. 18, leaving it up to the 17th Legislature to pass the 2010 budget.

Conference committee members Sen. Paul Manglona (R-Rota) and Yumul, however, said the dissolved committee will come up with a list of cost-cutting measures for the 17th Legislature.

FY 2010 started on Oct. 1, 2009.

In the absence of a passed budget for FY 2010, the CNMI government automatically started operating under the FY 2009 budget, amounting to $148.5 million. This practice is commonly known as a continuing resolution.

On Monday, acting Gov. Eloy S. Inos said the Fitial administration will not revise the FY 2010 appropriations of $150 million, but would like the incoming 17th Legislature to consider an eight-hour work cut per pay period and unpaid holidays, among other austerity measures.

ARRA

From Page 1

on www.cnmiarra.net to comply with ARRA transparency and accountability requirements.

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial warned that failure to announce ARRA-funded projects, programs and positions in the CNMI's official ARRA Web site, www.cnmiarra.net, will result in the denial of contracts or non-payment for goods and services procured.

The governor issued on Dec. 21 a memorandum to all agencies with any projects, programs, or positions funded under the ARRA Act through the Office of the Governor.

He said the posting of announcements on the official Web site is required in order to comply with the transparency and accountability requirements in the ARRA law.

The Dec. 21 memo was issued three days after the governor issued another memo warning Executive Branch personnel of "swift and final action which includes termination of employment" if they are found causing unjustified delay in capital improvement projects and other ARRA-funded projects.

Fitial also said that all autonomous agencies receiving ARRA funding through the Office of the Governor must also comply with the transparency requirements.

"Execution of contracts and procurement of goods or services which are attained without compliance to the transparency requirements will not be paid from funds through the Office of the Governor," he said.

Although the autonomous agency may procure goods and services through their own procurement offices, the transparency of these procurement will be in alignment with the direction provided.

This requirement, according to Fitial, does not extend to funds that are awarded directly to the autonomous agency; it only applies to funds that are awarded through the Office of the Governor or any Executive Branch agencies.

"It is the expectation of this administration that the CNMI manages funds available through the ARRA expediently, transparently, and with the highest level of accountability. As such, non-committal of funds due to non-compliance with established transparency requirements may result in a request from the primary grantee to reprogram funds from the federal grantor," the governor said.

As of yesterday, the opportunities posted on www.cnmiarra.net included an RFP for the upgrade for the CNMI government's financial system under the Division of Electronic Data Processing.

The other RFPs are from the Division of Environmental Quality. They include RFPs for an on-site wastewater database development, and environmental consulting services.

Job openings related to the Lao Lao Bay project are also being posted, specifically for a field coordinator, project administrator, project coordinator, and entry-level ecologist. DEQ received a grant of almost $3 million for work around Lao Lao Bay to protect coral reefs there.

Overall, the CNMI has so far drawn down at least $12 million of the estimated $97 million in ARRA funds awarded to all Commonwealth agencies, Commerce Secretary Michael Ada told *Saipan Tribune* on Monday.

For the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2010 alone, the CNMI has drawn down $7.6 million.

PSS gets $45M in total federal grants in 2009

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The CNMI Public School System was approved a total of $45 million in federal assistance from three major grants this year, according to the report of its federal programs officer, Tim Thornburgh.

The amount is significantly higher than what the system used to get from federal agencies in previous years.

Thornburgh reported to the Board of Education that the $45 million total includes the $32.3 million from the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund; the $9.2 million consolidated grant from the U.S. Department of Education; and $3.6 million from the consolidated American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant.

The SFSF was approved in October, according to Thornburgh, of which $24.3 million has already been received and allocated to schools.

The $32.3 million SFSF funding involves two phases: Phase 1 is the $24.3 million that directly went to PSS. The balance of $8 million is for Phase 2, which will be allocated to restore 105 teachers and counselors position that were eliminated in the last four years due to budget cuts in the local government.

Thornburgh said that PSS has two years to spend the SFSF grant.

A significant portion will be used to repair and renovate the CNMI's 20 public schools. Thornburgh said PSS would replace leaking classroom roofs, add energy-efficient air conditioning units and lighting fixtures, and make numerous electrical and plumbing upgrades. Major repairs are set to be done during summer, when students are out of campuses.

PSS will also expand its career and technical education programs at all high schools and will buy 3,203 laptop computers for all high school students.

The $9.2 million consolidated grant from the USDOE will also go directly to all public schools, Thornburgh said. The amount is expected to be awarded after the holidays.

Thornburgh said $3 million of this grant will be allocated to public schools on Saipan, Rota, and Tinian under the innovative assistance grant program, while $1.5 million is earmarked for the salaries and benefits of 32 classroom teachers. About $874,000 will be used to pay for 24 reading resource teachers, while $870,532 is allocated for 41 Troops to Teachers.

A total of $1.1 million will directly benefit private schools for their classroom instructional materials and equipment; and $800,000 is reserved for assessments, including the SAT-10.

The remaining funds will be used for school improvement projects such as the Saturday reading program, student academic competitions such as the National Forensic League, Thespians, mock trial, We the People mock congressional hearing, and other programs that benefit both public and private school students and their teachers.

Allocation of funds will be based on each school's enrollment figure.

The third major grant is the consolidated ARRA fund amounting to $3.6 million.

"The federal grants this year are significantly larger than in previous years," Thornburgh told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday.

He said this additional federal assistance will be used to help PSS achieve its goals and missions for the Commonwealth students.

Man told to answer charges of sexually abusing a minor

Superior Court Associate Judge Perry B. Inos ordered a 32-year-old man yesterday to answer charges that he sexually abused a female minor.

At a preliminary hearing, Inos found probable cause that the crimes of sexual abuse of a minor in the first degree, and sexual abuse of a minor in the second degree were committed.

Inos determined probable cause that John Sanchez may have committed the crimes.

The judge ordered Sanchez to appear on Jan. 4 for the arraignment.

Chief prosecutor George Hasselback represented the CNMI government. Assistant public defender Matthew Holley served as counsel for the defendant.

Police arrested Sanchez on Dec. 21 for allegedly sexually abusing a minor and slapping her.

Detective Steven A. Castro stated in his report that the defendant slapped the victim because she was talking to a male person at the carnival grounds near a school.

The detective said during an interview with the victim she further disclosed she had first sex with Sanchez at a motel in Gualo Rai in July 2007.

The defendant also allegedly beat up the victim in September 2008, but she never reported it to police. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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Six students get NMC Foundation scholarship grants

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The NMC Foundation recently awarded two-year scholarships to six students who are pursuing associate degrees in various fields.

The scholars—Sharisse Rivera, Jonathan Kiyoshi, Aofia Taylor, Joserin Mendiola, Lawrence Camacho, and Elowena Camacho—will each get $625 per semester for up to four semesters or up to the completion of an associate degree, whichever is sooner. Each student will potentially receive a total of up to $2,500.

The Northern Marianas College offers associate degrees in business administration, liberal arts, nursing, natural resource management, criminal justice, and hospitality management.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Natalie Mable E. Ayuyu on her graduation from college on Dec. 15, 2009, at Chaminade University, Honolulu Hawaii. Ayuyu, seen here with her parents, Joe and Marcia Ayuyu, together with Tyrone Palacios, graduated with an AA degree in Business Administration

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The six recipients of the NMC Foundation scholarship program, seated front, pose with members and officials of the NMC Foundation along with the college president Dr. Carmen Fernandez during an awarding ceremony last week on campus.

Foundation officials led by president Ben Babauta and NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez conferred the grant to the six recipients in a ceremony last week.

"We are extremely proud of these students. The selection process was tough, and I applaud them for their achievement," said Fernandez.

Besides Babauta, other Foundation officials present were Jerry Tan, Ivan Quichocho, and Yoichi Matsumura. Jack Kiyoshi was also present as representative of the Alumni Association.

The six students were selected based on merit and financial need, the candidates' community involvement, academic background, letters of recommendation, and a written essay. To be eligible for the scholarship, a student must be a U.S. citizen and a CNMI resident for the past three years; be accepted and enrolled as a full-time student at NMC; have had a high school or college cumulative GPA of 2.00 or better; and able to demonstrate financial need.

Despite the hard times, Foundation president Babauta said the non-profit group is making sure that assistance to deserving students will continue until they obtain their degrees.

"The Foundation board worked extremely hard to ensure that we make these scholarship funds available for deserving students. Given the economic difficulties that many families are experiencing at this time, we know that scholarship opportunities likes these are much needed," Babauta said.

Foundation officials also lauded the generosity of many donors who made the scholarship program possible for students. Babauta cited the success of the foundation's golf tournament and other fundraising activities for the year. He also praised the efforts of the scholarship committee, headed by Felicidad Ogumoro.

The NMC Foundation is a non-profit organization whose goal is to raise funds to support NMC, the CNMI's lone post-secondary educational institution. The organization is composed of individuals who are dedicated and committed to ensuring that CNMI students receive the utmost support in pursuing their educational goals. Other foundation members include Joanna Pai, Felicidad Ogumoro, and David Burger.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This week, the image of the Holy Infant will be brought to homes on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota as part of the tradition called the "Mangingi i Niño" or the veneration of the Christ Child.

Veneration of the 'Niño Jesus' at Christmastime

By JESS R.A. SONODA
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

The practice of venerating the image of the Christ Child at Christmastime has long been ingrained in the hearts and souls of the Chamorros and Carolinians of the Northern Marianas. It has now become an annual tradition, deeply respected and honored by the Catholic faithful in the Commonwealth.

On Dec. 25, 2009, the tradition continued, with every parish in the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa meeting at their respective churches at 8 o'clock in the morning to organize and send out bands of carolers to the community. Their mission: to accompany the 'Niño Jesus' (Baby Jesus) as He made His annual visitations and imparted His blessings to homes on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. This tradition is called the "Mangingi i Niño" or the veneration of the Christ Child.

Since most local residents consider Christmastime as officially beginning on Christmas and ending on the feast of the "Tres Reyes" (The Three Kings), these home visitations occur on Christmas, New Year's Day, and on every Sunday in between.

Equipped with musical instruments such as guitars, harmonicas, ukuleles (and in earlier days the mandolins and accordions) the carolers would knock on every door in the villages as they serenade the Niño Jesus with Christmas songs. This tradition also signifies that Jesus is indeed "the reason for the season."

As the carolers enter a home, the head of the household or sometimes even the children themselves would greet the Baby Jesus at the door. Then the statue of the Niño changes hands from carolers to household members, as Christmas greetings are exchanged. Next, the Niño is placed on a table prepared for Him in the "sala" (living room), while each family member pays homage to the Holy Infant by genuflecting and kissing the image of the Niño in humble reverence. This practice is followed by dropping a "limosna" (a monetary offering) to the heavenly King who came into the world in absolute poverty. Should there be a bedridden person in the house, the Niño would be brought into his/her room for a special encounter. Let it be noted here that, contrary to accusations of "worshipping" statues, we are rather showing reverence and respect to the image of the Niño, much as we do to pictures of a dear one in our lives. "Worship" belongs to God alone.

At some homes, carolers are treated to food and drinks before departing the house. This is especially true of those hosts who voluntarily wish to go the extra mile in honor of the Niño, or for those who have made a "promesa" (promise) to host the Infant's cohorts at Christmas. Such a treat is very much appreciated by the carolers as some groups, depending on the size of their parish, may have actually spent the entire day in service to the Baby King!

According to Tan Ko' Palacios of Chalan Kanoa District 3, the "Mangingi" is a Christmas tradition which is very dear to his heart. He has participated in this service even as a very young man, throughout his adult life, and even until now. Now at over 80, he is still involved in service to the Church, although at a diminished pace and degree.

As to when the "Mangingi" tradition actually began, Tan Ko' confessed that he really did not have this information. He is sure of one thing though: that every year the Christ Child visited his home, his heart was filled with the season's joy and peace. And as the Niño would leave his home and family before the next year rolls around, he would whisper to Mary's Child a heartfelt "Thank you" for the honor of stopping by and "Until next year again…hopefully!"

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COMMONWEALTH
ZONING BOARD

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

To Participate in Zoning Office's Island-Wide Junk Car Removal & Recycling Program

The Zoning Office is interested in receiving Expressions of Interest for the removal of junk vehicles by qualified towing and recycling operations. Responding companies must be willing to pick up any and all junk vehicles identified and processed by the Zoning Office at no charge to the CNMI government. It is estimated that there are as many as 18,000 junk vehicles on the island of Saipan.

All companies wishing to register for this program must have a valid recycling permit from the CNMI Division of Environmental Quality.

Please include in your Expression of Interest a description of your firm's operations, permits and number of vehicles that can be taken per month. Interested companies need to be willing to take large and small vehicles in any condition.

The Zoning Office will take every qualified company that submits an Expression of Interest, but reserves the right not to select any of the responding companies for the program. The Zoning Office will publish the approved list of the selected company or companies and advise the public of the start of the program, which is anticipated to begin in January. The Zoning Office will provide an equal number of vehicles to each approved company on a rotating schedule to be determined.

Submissions should be clearly marked "Expression of Interest – Junk Car Removal"

Format of submission
- On 8 1/2" x 11" on company letterhead
- One electronic file version in PDF, MS Word or MS PowerPoint format, by email to staff@zoning.gov.mp (use subject line: "Junk Vehicle Program")

Where and when to submit and questions
Address your questions, the Expression of Interest and other correspondence to:

Hand Delivery: Zoning Office, 2nd floor, Joeten Building, DanDan, Saipan
US Mail: Zoning Office, Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950
E-mail: staff@zoning.gov.mp

Attn: Junk Vehicle Program.

Proposals must be received at the Zoning Office by 3:00 pm, Friday, January 4th , 2010.

/s/ Herminia M. Fusco, Chair

Job Announcement

Zoning Enforcement Officer

COMMONWEALTH
ZONING BOARD

The Commonwealth Zoning Board is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Zoning Enforcement Officer. This is a full-time position on Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Duties and Responsibilities: Conduct and supervise field surveys to inspect for, and verify compliance with, the Zoning Law and to collect land use information as instructed by the Zoning Administrator. Supervise and prepare notices of violation and other compliance documents for approval by the Zoning Administrator. Coordinate the field enforcement activities of the Zoning Officers, including serving violation notices, setting schedules, the design and implementation of information gathering procedures, and written follow-up. Manage all aspects of issuing, tracking, and processing zoning violation notices, including conducting pre- and post-notice consultations, reviewing for compliance, tracking timelines and public notice requirements, coordinating interagency consultations, and prepare written recommendations and reports. Maintain and publish zoning violation fine guidelines and schedules as approved by the Board and Zoning Administrator. Assure consistent and justifiable imposition of fines and enforcement actions. Seek legal advice as directed by the Zoning Administrator and coordinate enforcement notice procedures, fine imposition, and abatement actions with legal counsel and provide weekly written status reports to the Zoning Administrator. Gather, research and coordinate property leasing and ownership information with government agencies. Coordinate efforts and procedures for unsafe and derelict building violation enforcement and abatement with the Dept.of Public Works, Dept. of Public Safety and Dept. of Public Health. Performs other related duties as assigned.

Minimum Requirements: a Bachelor's Degree either in engineering, architecture, urban planning, environmental science, geography, economics, political science, natural science, business administration, or related field, plus a minimum of 3 years of progressive experience in any combination of land use planning, zoning, construction management, business administration, public health, environmental management, public policy, natural resource management, land management, regulatory and permitting enforcement or related field. The salary range is from $36,000 to $40,000, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Health, life and retirement benefits are provided. Information about the Zoning Board and the Zoning Office may be viewed at the Zoning Board website: www.zoning.gov.mp. Application submittals should be addressed to Victor Barrett, Zoning Administrator. Submittals may be sent via e-mail, FAX, U.S. mail, or hand delivered to the address below. Submittals must include a letter of interest, a CNMI Application For Employment, and a resume. The Application for Employment may be downloaded from the publications page of the Zoning Board website. Applicants must be US citizens, permanent residents or immediate relatives. Send submittals to: E-mail: staff@zoning.gov.mp. FAX: 670-234-9666. US Mail: Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950 USA. Hand Delivery: Zoning Office, 2nd Floor, Joeten Building, DanDan, Saipan.

Bill designating Lau Lau Bay as boat launching site is vetoed

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial vetoed a bill designating Lau Lau Bay as a boat launching site to facilitate quicker response times for emergencies located in the eastern coastline of Saipan, citing a potential for increased liability against the CNMI and lack of identified resources in the bill.

House Bill 16-219, HD1, introduced by Rep. Joseph P. Deleon Guerrero, sought to speed up response time for emergencies on the eastern side of Saipan such as the drowning of four students at the Forbidden Island beach in March 2007.

Fitial, in vetoing the bill on Dec. 14, recognized the need to respond to unique circumstances arising from the tragedy at the Forbidden Island beach, adding that all involved share in the sorrow arising from the loss of four lives.

"However valid these concerns, the structure of this measure has sufficient problems that it must, with reluctance, be disapproved," Fitial said in his two-page veto message to House Speaker Arnold I. Palacios (R-Saipan) and Senate President Pete P. Reyes (R-Saipan).

The governor said the bill "creates the potential for increased liability against the Commonwealth."

He cited as an example a potential argument that may arise wherein the Executive Branch will be liable for failure to properly establish, maintain and use the Lau Lau Bay Boat Launching Site if harm is caused to a person.

"Argument will further assert that a standard of strict liability against the Commonwealth should be applied rather than mere negligence since the Legislature has designated the area as hazardous," the governor said.

Fitial added that the bill directs certain administrative actions by agencies within the Executive Branch without identifying any resources.

"For the reasons stated above, I am returning this bill disapproved. Thank you for your understanding on this matter," Fitial told the presiding officers of the Legislature.

HB 16-219 passed the House on Sept. 22, 2009, and cleared the Senate on Oct. 28, 2009.

The proposed boat launching site is located adjacent to Forbidden Island, Tank Beach, and Marine Beach, which are popular among tourists and locals.

H.B. 16-219 said there have been many reported drowning in the area even prior to the March 2007 tragedy and that it is time to take action.

It said rescue boats launching from the Smiling Cove Marina are confronted with many challenging variables in trying to conduct a search and rescue operation on the east side of Saipan. ***(Haidee V. Eugenio)***

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Dec. 30 1988

Bill seeks to regulate entry of FAS citizens
A bill restricting entry of Freely Associated States citizens into the Northern Marianas has drawn the support of important government agencies that said the uncontrolled migration impacts resources and infrastructure. The bill, pending at the House of Representatives, would allow the government to strengthen its immigration system and set clear-cut policies on admitting Micronesians, according to papers submitted to the Legislature. Mary Lou S. Ada, executive director of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, said the proposal will ease the burden of granting subsidy to low-income families under a welfare program that also covers FAS citizens.

MVA lobbies for Nagoya route
The Marianas Visitors Authority has asked the association of Japanese travel agents on the island to recommend to Japan Airlines to provide Nagoya-Saipan direct service even at least twice a week. In a letter to Kiyoshi Aikawa, president of the Japan Saipan Travel Association, MVA board chairman David M. Sablan said he is seeking the understanding of all the organization's members to help revitalize the tourism economy which has been on a downturn due to the financial crisis in Asia. The request came after MVA found out that JAL has decided to inaugurate its daily direct flights from Nagoya to Guam beginning April 1999. Unfortunately, there has been no mention at all of any scheduled JAL Nagoya flight to Saipan.

Dec. 30 1999

House stalls action on FAS restriction
Lawmakers yesterday dilly-dallied on legislation seeking to restrict stay of Freely Associated States citizens in the Northern Marianas because of fears that it may strain relations with neighboring islands and lead to a decline in labor pool coming from the region. The proposed law sparked emotional discussion in the House of Representatives over the strong historical and cultural ties with peoples from FSM, Palau and the Marshalls, which together form the FAS under the Compact agreement with the United States allowing them free entry into any U.S. soil. Sponsored by Rep. Melvin O. Faisao, House Bill 11-294 or the FAS Habitual Residency Act aims to provide a mechanism by which the CNMI government can track the number of Micronesians residing on the island, as well as guidelines on who can enter into the Commonwealth.

Gov't prepares for possible Y2K woes
An inter-agency group under the Y2K Task Force will be on standby beginning 10:00 p.m. on Dec. 31 to monitor and respond to possible troubles arising from the so-called millennium bug. The Unified Command System will be in operation until 6:00 a.m. New Year's Day. The government, with the assistance of the Office of Insular Affairs, has created the monitoring team to ensure that any Y2K-related problems will be addressed immediately. According to Keith Parsky, public information officer of OIA, the Department of the Interior has established 13 command centers for this purpose, including a command post for the region.

Dec. 30 2002

BoG may lose govt accounts
In view of Bank of Guam's withdrawal from an earlier proposal to grant the CNMI government its urgently needed $19-million loan, some government officials and members of the public have proposed that the government pull out its accounts with the BoG, according to Gov. Juan N. Babauta. Babauta disclosed in an interview yesterday that several public officials and local residents made such a call following the failed loan negotiations. "There's some feeling, a growing sentiment among our elected government officials and the general public, that we pull out-take our money from the bank-because they feel that the BoG didn't negotiate with us in good faith," said the Governor.

Senate moves on SEDC recommendations
Sen. Ramon Guerrero pledged to work closely with the departments of Commerce and Labor and Immigration to hammer out an acceptable business application process that would cut through the jungle of red tape that is choking the entry of new businesses into the Commonwealth. This comes in the wake of the several recommendations that were pushed by the Strategic Economic Development Council during a recent meeting with lawmakers and Executive Branch officials, including Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente.

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Mackerel PACIFIC 22.4 LBS. $20.99 — PIKE 22.07 LBS. $23.99

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GUSTO SMOKE HAM $1.99 /POUND

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Bar-S Hotdog 1 lb. $1.09

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Bar-S Hotlinks 24 oz. $3.99

Mackarel Family Bag $5.99

Peeled Shrimp SC Brand 1 lb. $2.99

Seafood Mix Log Feng Brand 1 lb. $2.59

Blue Crab Section Per Box $8.95

Vega Shrimp 1 lb. $4.99

Imperial Choice Green Mussels 2 lbs. $4.99

Chicken Wings 3 lbs. $5.99 /PACK — 5.5 lbs. $11.99 /PACK

Milk Fish $1.39

Tilapia $0.99¢

U.S. Extra Large Eggs Dozen $1.99 3 days only (12/30 - 1/01) — $2.29

Onion 79¢ /LB

Garlic per bundle 89¢

Spam 12 oz. LIMIT 6 ALL FLAVORS $2.29

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Libby's & Armour Vienna Sausage 5 oz. 69¢

Beach Cliff Sardines 3.75 oz. 89¢

Ox & Palm Corned Beef 11.5 oz. LIMIT 6 $2.29

Hormel Mary Kitchen Corned Beef Hash 15 oz. $1.99

Hormel Chili No Beans 15 oz. $1.99

DM Beef Stew 15 oz. 2 FOR $3.00

Master A1 Tuna 7 oz. Limit 6 99¢

3 Diamond Tuna $1.19

Sun Flower Mackarel 15 oz. $1.59

Campbells Chicken Noodle Soup 10.7 oz. 99¢

Cream of Mushroom 10 3/4 oz. 99¢

Del Monte Whole Kernel Corn 89¢

Carnation Evaporated 12 oz. $1.19

Crisco All Vegetable Shortening 3 lbs. $4.99

Dragon Veg. Oil 1 Gal. $6.99

Vegetable Oil 5 Gal. LIMIT 1 $23.99

Garden Fresco Vegetable Oil 1 Gal. $7.99

Heavenly Chef White Vinegar $2.99

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Kraft Cool Whip 8 OZ. $1.99 — 16 OZ. $3.50

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Mazwell House 34.5 oz. $9.99

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Nong Shim Bowl Noodle $6.99

Country Time Lemonade 2.33 Kg. $7.99

Tang 22 qts. $6.99

Lipton Ice Tea 4 oz. $6.99

Kool Aid 2.33 Kg. $7.99

Sunkist 1 Case Warm Only $5.99

Whole Chicken Can 50 oz. $5.99

Real Fresh Milk (Regular only) $20.99 /CASE — 236 ml. $16.99

Enfamil LIPIL Lipil 25.7 oz. $29.99

Enfamil Lipil with Iron 8 oz by 16 cans $41.99 per case

Coke Regular 24/Case Warm Only $12.99

Shasta Drinks Dr. Pepper 12oz (warm or cold) $9.99
Ritz Drink All Flavor (warm only) $12.99

Pepsi 330ml Warm Only $13.99 /CASE — All Flavors

Budweiser/Budlight 24/Case Warm Only — 3 days only (12/30 - 1/01) $24.99 — $25.99

Korean Butane Gas LIMIT 1 Case — 3 days only (12/30 - 1/01) $19.99 /CASE

Foam Cups 51 cnts. $1.99

Bounty Basic 15 ROLLS $15.99 — 8 ROLLS $8.99

Bounty 15 Rolls $19.99

Foam Plates 125 ct. $6.99

Drypers Mega ALL SIZE $14.99

Spoon & Fork No Brand Name 100 cnts. $1.29

Horse Shampoo 1 qrt. 2 FOR $3.00

Bottled White Candle 12 pcs/case $13.99 /CASE

Drypers (All Size) Mega Pack $14.99

Luvs Big Pack (All Size) $19.99

Cottonelle Single 24 rolls Tissue $8.99

Diamond Foil 200 Sq. Ft. $6.99

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GAIN LIQUID (300 OZ.)	$16.95
JOY ULTRA LEMON DISHWASHING LIQUID (90 OZ.)	$6.99
SUAVE SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER (15 OZ.)	2 FOR $3.00
PLATINUM NAPKIN (360 CTS)	$3.99

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
Mark Rabago ASSISTANT EDITOR

MEMBER
The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Don't carelessly push out the Hmong

Southeast Asia has witnessed more than its share of war and political violence in the past half-century. From the bloody conflict and communist repression in Vietnam, to the killing fields of Cambodia, to the various crackdowns in Burma, the region's woes have generated hundreds of thousands of refugees in need of haven and resettlement. Throughout that time, the most peaceful and politically open country in the area, Thailand, has generally made room for those fleeing persecution and danger.

Thailand's performance stands in contrast to that of other nearby states, such as China, which has frequently repatriated North Koreans escaping starvation and tyranny. Indeed, Beijing has pressured other countries to adopt a similarly ungenerous approach to those fleeing China's own internal repression: Just last week, the Cambodian government of Prime Minister Hun Sen forcibly sent home 20 Uighur asylum seekers who fled after the July protests in Urumqi, China — despite the fact that they had been issued "Persons of Concern" letters by the U.N. Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in Cambodia.

Now Thailand, too, may be turning its back on its international obligation not to expel legitimate refugees. The Hmong people of neighboring Laos have been targets going back to the days four decades ago when they fought alongside the United States against the communists who now run Laos. The United States has resettled many of them. But Thailand is moving to expel about 4,300 Hmong asylum seekers held within its territory. Not all of them necessarily merit protection under international law; clearly, though, many do. Among those reportedly at risk of deportation are 158 Hmong in detention in Nong Khai province who have been screened and granted U.N. refugee status. U.S. officials are concerned that the Thai military, which controls a refugee camp holding 4,200 of the Hmong, has not permitted a fair and transparent process to determine who among the camp residents would merit protection.

The U.S. government is urging Bangkok not to forcibly return the Hmong, so that potential refugees may be interviewed by officials from the United States and other nations offering to resettle refugees. Thailand has legitimate concerns about the burden on its economy posed by irregular migrants. But it has no reason to hastily or arbitrarily push out people who may be at risk. Working together with the United States and other friends, Thailand can avoid staining its proud record.

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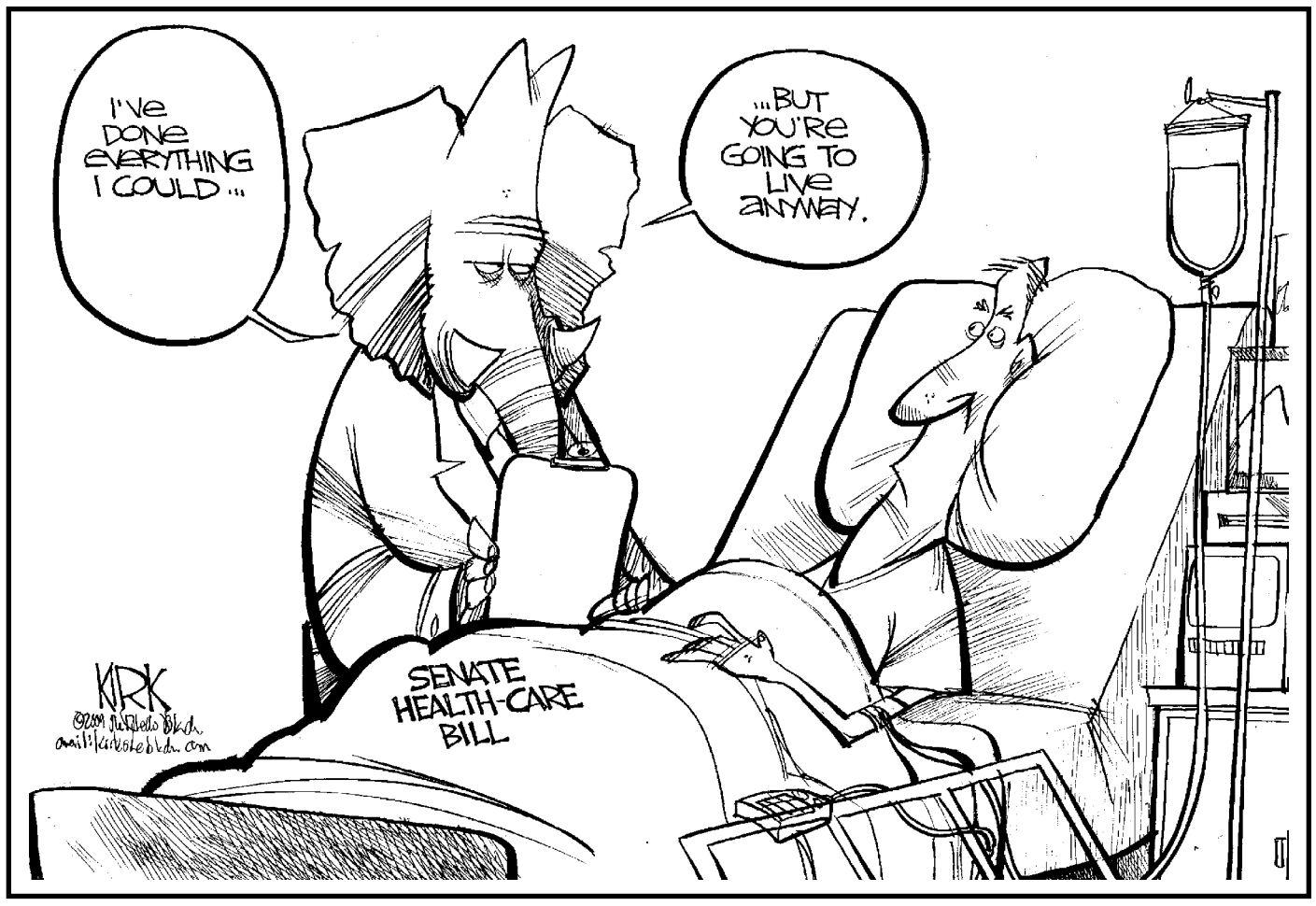


Article XII: A brief summary of its history and provisions

By HOWARD P. WILLENS and DEANNE C. SIEMER
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Editor's Note: This article was submitted for publication by the Committee to Change Article XII, with permission from the authors. Due to its length, it is being published here as a four-part series.

First of a four-part series

Several years ago we were asked by the Council for the Humanities to participate in the annual Teachers Training Institute organized by the council and the Public School System. The programs we prepared for this purpose were based on our two histories relating to the Northern Mariana Islands. The first is titled *National Security and Self-Determination: United States Policy in Micronesia* (1961-1972) published by Praeger in 2000; and the second is titled *An Honorable Accord: The Covenant between the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States* published by the University of Hawaii in 2001.

One of our programs prepared in 2002 was a PowerPoint presentation discussing Article XII of the CNMI Constitution. Article XII regulates the sale of land in the Northern Marianas Islands. The program discusses four specific questions with respect to Article XII. What is it? Where did it come from? How does it work? And how can it be changed?

The basic rule established by Article XII of the Constitution is contained in its first section. Section 1 is entitled Alienation of Land. Alienation means sale. Sections 1 provides that the acquisition of real property within the Commonwealth shall be restricted to persons of Northern Mariana Descent ("NMD").

The concerns reflected in Article XII arose in part because of the confused land situation confronting the local inhabitants at the conclusion of World War II. During the decades of exploitation in these islands, the Japanese took much of the land from the local population to use for their commercial, governmental and military purposes. Contemporaneous photographs show the extensive development of Saipan during the 1920s and 1930s.

During this period the Japanese had approximately 45,000 civilians inhabiting the Northern Mariana Islands. As WWII approached, they stationed an additional 30,000 military personnel on these islands. The impact of the invasion was devastating, not only on the people on these islands, but on the property owned by the local people or by the Japanese.

After the invasion, the U.S. military took possession of the land that had been used by the Japanese for governmental, military, or commercial purposes. They used it for military installations and for government operations, including the CIA-operated training facility on Saipan.

In 1947, the United States entered into a trusteeship agreement with the United Nations. Under the terms of this agreement, the United States as trustee had responsibility for administering the islands and preparing the people ultimately for a decision regarding their future political status. At the time the trusteeship agreement came into affect, approximately 90 percent of the land in the Northern Marianas was in the hand of the military and the Trust Territory administration. The Trust Territory subsequently adopted laws providing that land could be sold only to Trust Territory citizens. Most of the local inhabitants, about 5,000 in number in the Northern Marianas, were Trust Territory citizens.

Political status negotiations between the United States and the Northern Marianas began in December 1972. At the first working session the Marianas Political Status Commission identified the issues that had to be addressed during the discussions, such as political status, economic support and development, and land. Chairman Edward Pangelinan of the Commission raised the question about the future purchase and use of land because of the Commission's concern that affiliation with the United States would also attract large numbers of United States, Japanese, and other investors to the Northern Marianas seeking land for personal or commercial purposes.

The Marianas negotiators were aware that outside investors had taken over a very large percentage of the land in Hawaii and Guam. They wanted, if possible, to prevent such an outcome in the Northern Marianas. They were also aware that in 1950 the U.S. Congress had rejected, on constitutional grounds, an effort to protect Guam from unrestricted exploitation by outside investors.

It was understood from the beginning that the U.S. Constitution presented a substantial roadblock to any effort to limit the sale of land in the future Northern Marianas commonwealth. Section 2 of Article 4 of the U.S. Constitution provides that the citizens of each state shall be entitled to all privileges and amenities of citizens in the several states.

Everyone knew that one of the major objectives of these status negotiations was to provide U.S. citizenship to the Northern Marianas people. If they achieved this citizenship and then imposed restrictions on land ownership, it would mean that some U.S. citizens could buy land in the Northern Marianas and that other U.S. citizens could not, an apparent violation of Section 2.

Amendment 14 to the U.S. Constitution was another substantial obstacle to any restrictions on land transactions. It guarantees that the government will not deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law, nor deny any person within its jurisdiction of the equal protection of the laws. The first part of the amendment means that the Northern Marianas could not take away property already owned by outsiders. The second part of the amendment means that the Northern Marianas could not base property rights in the classification by race.

To be continued tomorrow.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Saipanpreneur Profile: Rabby Syed

From Bangladesh to the streets of Saipan

The only way to take control of your life, raise your standard of living and move beyond merely surviving is to create your own unique product or service that you offer to increasing numbers of people in exchange for the things of value that you desire. This simple formula applies to countries as well as people. A self-sufficient economy has its own products or services of value to export to the world. Similarly, a self-sufficient individual has something of value to exchange in the global marketplace. That thing of value is based on your natural talent, skill, or interest—in other words, your passion!

With aspirations of a bright future, Rabby F. Sayed traveled from the capital city of Dhaka in Bangladesh, and arrived on Saipan on Jan. 14, 1997, to take a job as a security guard with BMW after seeing an ad in his hometown newspaper.

Since then, in the nearly 13 years he's been on the island, he has evolved and made his mark in many spheres of island life:

Rabby knows the community: He has been a Head Start policy council member, vice president of the International Business Club at NMC, a volunteer for the CNMI Victim Hotline, and a member of CrimeStoppers.

Rabby knows hard work: While pursuing a degree at NMC, he achieved the Phi Beta Kappa "Most Outstanding Student" award. He made the President's List and the American National Dean's List.

Rabby knows the plight of contract workers: He is the current president of The United Workers Movement-NMI since 2008.

Finally, for the past 10 years, Rabby knows taxis: He is an independent taxi driver, as well as the founder and president of the Saipan City Taxi Association since 2001.

As a result of, and through his myriad involvements, he has developed and expressed his personal passion for helping the CNMI be the best it can be as a place to live, raise a family, and do business.

Rabby and I met recently at Winchell's in Garapan to share his story, observations, insights and vision for the CNMI, derived from his fascinating experience as a taxi driver on the streets of Saipan.

Walt: How did you discover Saipan?

Rabby: I had already received my Bachelor of Arts from Bangladesh National University. I was a single guy working for a marketing and sales company in Bangladesh, in advertising. I heard about the security job, and was interested in coming to Saipan because of the salary. It was very lucrative compared with Bangladesh's economy at that time.

Walt: And what kept you here?

Rabby: It's a unique story. I found my wife, the lady in my life, Vicky, Victoria Cepeda-Syed, a year after I arrived. I was a single guy at that time. She made me understand the beauty of life as a couple. We got married in 1998. Then I had four beautiful children—Parnel, Pollen, Roma and Farzana—and I decided to stay here for the rest of my life. My family and my heart is here now. I even have two of my nephews from Bangladesh studying and staying here too!

Walt: Most people wouldn't guess that you're also a filmmaker.

Rabby: Yes, I'm very grateful to the Northern Marianas College. I completed a program in film and television. That was my expertise and my passion back home. So, thanks to NMC, I became a certified filmmaker. My student project was a documentary by director Steve Rubin on (storied WWII marine) Guy Gabaldon. I was the camera man for the documentary.

I worked with actor [and former Saipan resident] Dan Shor on "Looking for America" which was filmed entirely here on Saipan [DVD available at www.saipanpreneur.com; Rabby also appears in the film].

I also worked on "Water is Cool" a documentary sponsored by the Department of Public Health on drinking water, and was the camera man for one of Verizon's television advertisements.

Walt: You've been a taxi driver now for several years. What strikes me is that you and your fellow drivers have direct contact with tourists every day from the moment they arrive, to when they leave.

Rabby: Yes, taxis are often the first impression that the tourists have of Saipan. We communicate with them and discover their needs, what they like and dislike about the island and their time here. We have a lot of valuable information and input about what our visitors are thinking and feeling.

Walt: Yes, you're like the welcoming committee, tour guide, information center, and you even conduct your own unofficial "exit surveys" of the thousands of people who visit the island. That's a lot of power and information!

Rabby: We're not just taxi drivers. We're not just moving people around. We're participating and shaping their experience. We're independent business owners with a lot of influence on Saipan's tourism.

Walt: Most people aren't aware of just how seriously you take that role and responsibility.

Rabby: I worked with Eric Plinske (former director of Small Business Development at NMC), who was my counselor at that time, and attended training seminars and workshops on customer service and how to build customer loyalty. That gave me a vision of what we can and should be during for our valued customers and for tourism.

Walt: So, is that why you formed the Saipan City Taxi Association?

Rabby: Yes, being taxi drivers, we felt we could do a lot of things beyond just transporting passengers. We needed to know about the market and do things to improve the market. The association's mission is to enhance the taxi industry in the CNMI by working on behalf of the needs of the customers as well as the drivers. Our motto is "Customers first."

Walt: What else does the association do?

Rabby: We conduct many training programs. Our drivers are trained in speaking basic Japanese, Chinese, Russian and Korean. Recently, we worked with NMPASI [Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc.] to train our drivers how to take care of the disabled and other special needs tourists. I myself take courses at NMC to learn American Sign Language. With the collaboration of DPS [Department of Public Safety], we take training on how to handle children, install car seats effectively, and have refresher courses on public safety and traffic laws. We are prepared for many special situations.

Walt: What are some of the things you've learned in your "on the streets" research interacting with the tourists?

Rabby F. Sayed

Rabby: As a tourist destination, Saipan needs a better product to sell. Yes, we have water games, snorkeling, banana boat rides, and those activities are great, but they are not enough. Saipan has always had a family-oriented image, but there is just not enough entertainment, especially for the kids. Our MVA [Marianas Visitors Authority] data shows that many tourists from Japan—our main market—come back several times. We need more shopping malls and different activities for them.

Walt: What are some challenges the drivers face in doing business?

Rabby: Well, there is a perception here on Saipan that taxi drivers overcharge our customers, and I am personally working on fixing that.

First, I would say to everyone, please don't evaluate every driver based on a few persons' bad conduct. Most of the taxi drivers are concerned about their businesses, make an honest living and are serious about good service. If someone has a bad experience with a driver, they should contact the Taxi Bureau. And, by the way, for everyone's information, there is a law that says the driver and the customer can negotiate the price of the fare.

Second, taxi drivers do pay higher insurance premiums, car maintenance costs, license renewal fees, and registrations, and if the government listens to our suggestions to redesign the industry, we can make things better and more affordable for everyone.

Walt: Of the 100 or so legal taxis operating on Saipan, your association has about 20 members.

Rabby: Yes, we have Filipino, Thai, one Sri Lankan, but mostly Bangladeshi drivers. Membership is limited because we won't accept just anybody. Before we accept a driver, we find out the driver's history and reputation because we have a strict standard of conduct we expect.

As an industry here on Saipan, we drivers do not have enough information out there about us and what we do, what we know and how vital we are to tourism.

Walt: OK, I'll offer you a page on the DestinationSaipan.com site to promote the association's views and suggestions, but please share some of them here with us.

Rabby: To improve the taxi drivers' image, our association recommends:

- that our drivers wear uniforms—(flower shirt, black pants; see webpage*);
- that they display their taxi association identification prominently so customers have the assurance they won't be overcharged;
- that the Taxi Bureau become more visible in the industry by conducting visits to the taxi stands, as well as surveillance operations to monitor the transactions and interactions with the customers;
- the formation of a task force between the Taxi Bureau, Immigration, ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and USCIS (US Citizenship and Immigration Service) to crack down on illegal operations….

*[*For more of Rabby's Top 10 list of The Saipan City Taxi Association's suggestions for "destination enhancement," and improvement of the taxi industry, visit www.destinationsaipan.com/taxi]*

In the brief 90 minutes we spoke, I learned things I never knew about Saipan, about the taxi industry, and about Rabby himself. He is a community activist. He is a marketer who values customer satisfaction highly. He's a filmmaker with an eye for detail, who understands the power of the visual image and how the things people (our tourists) see affect their emotions, their impression of the island, and our own brand identity. He's a student who takes his education seriously. He's an advocate who fights for justice. He's a committed husband and doting father of four children.

And even though I realize I just barely scratched the surface of Rabby, the man, what is clear is that he brings that compassion, that awareness, that background, that talent and education, that commitment, and those family values to all of his many efforts to make real and meaningful changes in the life of a place he now calls his home.

I asked him if he's been back home since arriving. He tells me no. When I ask about his parents in Bangladesh, his moods shifts ever-so-slightly when he tells me they passed on many years ago while he was here on Saipan, and then he adds:

"Saipan is a unique tropical island. Good location. Impressive diving. Wonderful people. It's a melting pot of Asia that contains the diversity of all the people of the world. So many various kinds of people on such a small island. And the Chamorro and Carolinian people are very welcoming and wonderful. They are fabulous people with a wonderful culture. *This* is my home."

Welcome to Rabby's Saipan. Where can we take you today?

■ ■ ■ ■

***Note**: Ever wanted to direct your friends and family to a set of Web sites that revealed the best things about Saipan? Do what I do: send them to www.bestofsaipan.com!*

Note: Fans and followers of the book, *Chicken Feathers and Garlic Skin: Diary of a Chinese Garment Factory Girl on Saipan* may now find copies here on Saipan at Fu Dogs & Qi (pronounced chi), Saipan's only Asian Antiques Store, located on the first floor of the Nauru Building (the "360 building") in Susupe.

■ ■ ■ ■

Until next week, remember, success is a journey, not a destination!

Walt F.J. Goodridge is author of 15 books including Turn Your Passion Into Profit*. Walt offers coaching and workshops to help people pursue and profit from their passions. Originally from the island of Jamaica, Walt has grown several successful businesses in the US, and now makes his home here in Saipan. To learn more about the Saipanpreneur Project and Walt's philosophy and formula visit www.saipanpreneur.com and www.passionprofit.com.*

The Saipanpreneur Project

Creating economic success for the CNMI

By WALT F.J. GOODRIDGE

Special to the Saipan Tribune

Send article suggestions, entrepreneur nominations and feedback about this article to walt@passionprofit.com.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Mostly sunny. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲87° ▼76°	▲87° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	▲83	▼76
Palau	Showers	▲86	▼78
Yap	Rain	▲86	▼77
Chuuk	Sunny	▲89	▼81
Pohnpei	Sunny	▲87	▼76
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼79
Majuro	Showers	▲82	▼79

Around The Globe

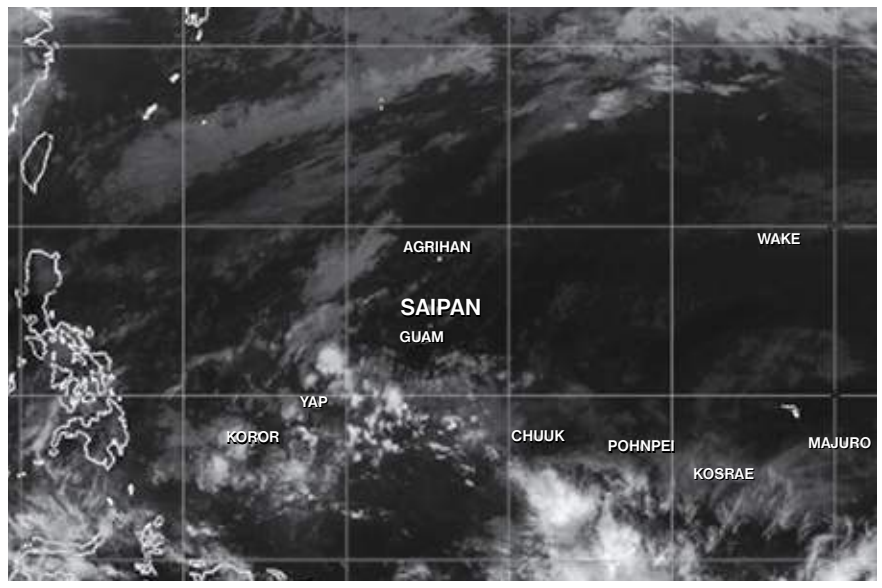
Auckland	Cloudy	▲65	▼55
Beijing	Sunny	▲21	▼ 3
Hong Kong	Rain	▲64	▼59
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲80	▼67
London	Showers	▲46	▼39
Los Angeles	Mostly Cloudy	▲64	▼48
Manila	Partly Sunny	▲87	▼73
Melbourne	Sunny	▲94	▼72
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲76	▼65
New York	Partly Sunny	▲32	▼27
Osaka	Showers	▲47	▼31
Paris	Showers	▲51	▼42
Pusan	Partly Sunny	▲37	▼16
Rome	Dreary	▲63	▼51
Salem	Rain	▲45	▼34
San Francisco	Rain	▲55	▼47
Seoul	Flurries	▲23	▼ 6
Tokyo	Cloudy	▲56	▼32
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲38	▼28

Tides

Saipan Harbor

12:09 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.5 Feet
7:29 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
12:20 PM	Today	Low Tide:	1.4 Feet
5:05 PM	Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2009

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A stationary front extends southwestward from 25N140E past 22N130E with cloudiness and patchy rain along and up to 300 miles northwest of the front. A surface trough extends southeastward from 12N137E to 7N141E with scattered showers and a few thunderstorms northeast of Yap within 60 miles of a line from 12N139E to 11N143E. A weak circulation south of Palau is centered near 2N135E. Low-level convergence is causing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms from Palau to near Yap in an area from 5N130E to 9N138E to 3N140E back to 5N130E. Trade-wind convergence is triggering scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms from south of Chuuk to the equator south of a line from 6N152E to 1N161E and from Tarawa and the date line within 150 miles of a line from EQ174E to 4N179E. A shear line near Wake Island extends from 20N164E northeastward to beyond 24N180 with cloudiness and patchy rain within 125 miles of the shear line.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Thursday	6:43 AM	5:57 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Sunday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	4:16 PM	4:46 AM
Thursday	5:22 PM	5:50 AM
Friday	6:29 PM	6:52 AM
Saturday	7:35 PM	7:49 AM
Sunday	8:38 PM	8:41 AM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 22, 2009

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

C09597	11:30am	12:05pm	1, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM

C09597	12:40pm	1:10pm	1, 7

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:25am	5:15am	Daily
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
C09597	11:30am	1:10pm	1, 7 via ROP
C09601	12:20pm	1:10pm	4, 5
C09603	3:15pm	4:05pm	Daily
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:20pm	10:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NAGOYA (NGO)

NW287	6:00am	7:30pm	Daily via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

NW287	6:00am	8:40am	Daily
NW297	4:45pm	7:30pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ604	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ119	4:00am	11:25am	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA 6:40am, leave OSA 9:30am	
OZ606	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

CZ3008	3:30am	6:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ604/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ604/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ604/703	2:50am	11:25am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ608/705	3:20am	1:30am+1	1, 5 via PUS
C09603/933	3:15pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:20pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ604/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ604/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

C09598	3:10am	3:45am	5, 6
C09312	1:20pm	1:55pm	6

GUAM-ROTA (ROP)

C09598	2:00am	2:30am	5, 6
C09312	12:10pm	12:40pm	6

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:00am	2:50am	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
C09598	2:00am	3:45am	5, 6 via ROP
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C09312	12:10pm	1:55pm	6 via ROP
C09602	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	4:50pm	5:40pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NAGOYA (NGO)-SAIPAN

NW288	12:05pm	1:20am+1	Daily via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

NW298	10:05am	2:50pm	Daily
NW288	8:45pm	1:20am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ605	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA 8:50pm, leave OSA 9:50pm	
OZ603	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

CZ3007	7:30pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ716/605	12:30am	2:20pm	4 via ICN
OZ706/607	3:35am	2:10am+1	4, 7 via PUS
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:30am+1 via ICN	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
PR110/C09596	10:10pm	7:50am+1 via GUM	1, 3, 5, 6, 7
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	Daily via GUM
OZ704/605	11:55pm	2:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via ICN

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/605	12:30am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ750/605	1:00am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

- The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to accept or reject a contribution for publication; the right to edit all contributions, the date of publication, size of the picture, and page placement; and the right to publish contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats.
- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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2009: A Raucous Year

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

As the whippy trade winds breeze through at year's end, it offers the cool mist of the winter months to retreat into our little quiet corner at home for some thoughtful meditation. Some of us had to deal with exhaustion, retrenchment, inspirational fatigue, and intellectual atrophy or tired and suspect optimism. But there's the dawn of hope we can look forward to in the near term.

A few of us had to endure seismic review of our chaotic and dysfunctional relationship with the federal government. It demonstrates, in no uncertain terms, how Washington views and treats the CNMI, a dismal microcosm of our future relationship with the feds that that doesn't offer much hope for justice.

But don't despair. Justice entails a long march that sometime takes generations to resolve and U.S. history is replete with it. Returning indigenous scholars must carry on the responsibility to protect what's rightfully ours. It a long journey so be prepared for whatever comes your way.

Too, it is a year that brings a preview of what lies ahead: More for far less! Even larger economies have resorted to stimulus packages to ensure the global financial condition doesn't slip into a second double-digit recession. So we're not alone in this long winding issue. A small island economy is even more vulnerable to the negative impact of global financial meltdown cascading from larger economies. Aspirations may have been dashed given the severity of global effect on local economic contraction, but there's hope to scaffold intermittent despair as we retreat into the peaceful and tranquil spirit of the holiday season to think through issues.

Liberals in the U.S. Congress led by Rep. George Miller successfully demonized the apparel industry here to closure. Two other contributing factors put the final touches on this closure: fuel surcharge and federal minimum wage. It put a permanent damper on the prospects of labor-intensive manufacturing to a complete halt. There may be hope for capital-intensive investments but this too is suspect. The NMI needs to think outside the box and only we can do it as permanent hosts.

Did our detractors offer any economic substitute? I doubt Miller could employ human rights to demonize China after a loan of more than $780 billion for President Obama's stimulus package. Would we make any appreciable steps in full economic recovery anytime soon? I doubt that such would occur anytime soon.

The other, tourism, isn't going anywhere. More promotions aren't going to cut it either for as long as there doesn't exist what's known in the industry as load capacity destined for these isles. As we ponder our future in a struggling and fickle industry, airlines the world over are in the process of restructuring and redirecting unprofitable routes into profitable ones. It means we must buckle down and stick to due diligence over the usual tired cry of more promotions.

The CNMI has a non-voting delegate in the U.S. Congress. This demeaning stature reconfirms that the U.S. Constitution never had its territories in mind nor is it founded on truthful justice embracing the rights of its indigenous peoples. Otherwise, some real sense of justice would have prevailed granting every citizen inclusionary opportunities as equals. Yes, such is the strange nature of the sacred document that gave birth to our country 233 years ago. At the core of this issue is the non-inclusive aspect of the U.S. Constitution pertaining to its indigenous people across the country and in territories.

A reassessment of how the Covenant Agreement was unilaterally compromised by US Public Law 110-229 is imperative. The new federal imposition places in peril our trust and confidence in the refinement of what's now a highly dysfunctional relationship with the federal government. The new law proves that the agreement is a defective document that could whimsically be changed by dedicated and predatory detractors. It brings back vivid memories how we had to endure fortification of these isles during the naval administration. Is the placement of the NMI under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security a quiet overture to refortify these isles under the guise of national security? It boggles the mind every way imaginable.

There's also the historic gubernatorial run-off election that retained current leadership. The words: "confidence" and "credence" roundly re-echoed the voice of our people that they aren't ready for untried leadership wildly touting change without clear-cut parameters. The electorate clearly wanted an experienced captain and co-captain. They know that every day brings a new, impossible challenge that demands immediate attention; some new, tough decisions that must be made; some new, unprecedented problem that needs to be solved. The gig is no picnic, and executive experience matters. However the challenges before them, they know where's the goal line when they hit ground beginning on Jan. 11th.

Too, there are those whose loved ones have gone to claim their trophies in that gold mine in the skies. Others are dealt fate that remotely placed them elsewhere away from loved ones. In either case, the pain is severe and often unbearable. I join you all in prayers to let the healing process begin. As difficult as it may be, the power of prayers eventually heals all wounds. It's called hope.

After three decades of miscalculations from both sides of the Pacific Divide, the impending New Year offers solace to defining, re-charting our destiny, and refining communications with some sense of camaraderie among key players. We must work in unity to improve the livelihood of the indigenous people. It's the right thing to do as we move forward with conviction to dealing with beastly and costly issues we can't leave to convenient excuses.

However raucous our ride may have been, in '09 it still is a beautiful pearly isles. Our culture of reciprocity has sustained and lifted our spirits even amidst despair right into the dawn of hope. Let this be the beginning of another journey, a positive journey, in search of brighter tomorrows. Sen Mas, Felis Añu Nuebu!

2010
New Year's Eve Event
@ Aqua Resort Club, Saipan
December 31st, 2009
New Year's Eve Gala Dinner
@ Raraina Main Dining
6:00 pm -, 8:30 pm-
Adult $80 Child $40
20% discount for all local residents.
Enjoy live music, raffle games, magic & illusion show, BINGO games, exciting countdown and fireworks show!
Gala Dinner Buffet
@ Poolside
6:00 pm - 9:30 pm
Adult $60 Child $30
20% discount for all local residents.
COUNTDOWN PARTY
@ POOLSIDE
DOOR OPEN 10:00 PM
$10 ENTRANCE FEE WITH 1-FREE DRINK!
PLEASE COME AND LET'S ALL WELCOME
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For more information and reservation, please call Emma at 322-1234 ext: 322

SHIPPING SCHEDULE

MARIANA EXPRESS LINES PTE. LTD.

Outbound from Asia	Voyage No.	ETD Jakarta	ETD Bangkok	ETD P. Kelang	ETD Melbourne	ETD Singapore	ETD Hochiminh	ETD Busan	ETD Kobe	ETD Shanghai	ETD Auckland	ETD Manila	ETD Hongkong	ETD Kaoshiung	ETD Naha
MELL SERAPONG	002E	12/19 Sat	12/17 Thu	12/17 Thu	12/15 Tue	12/12 Sat	12/25 Fri	12/21 Mon	12/20 Sun	12/13 Sun	12/13 Sun	12/21 Mon	12/25 Fri	12/27 Sun	12/29 Tue
MELL SENTOSA	031E	12/26 Sat	12/24 Thu	12/24 Thu	12/22 Tue	12/19 Sat	1/1 Fri	12/28 Mon	12/27 Sun	12/20 Sun	12/20 Sun	12/28 Mon	1/1 Fri	1/3 Sun	1/5 Tue
MELL SEMBAWANG	024E	1/2 Sat	12/31 Thu	12/31 Thu	12/29 Tue	12/26 Sat	1/8 Fri	1/4 Mon	1/3 Sun	12/27 Sun	12/27 Sun	1/4 Mon	1/8 Fri	1/10 Sun	1/12 Tue
MELL SERAPONG	003E	1/9 Sat	1/7 Thu	1/7 Thu	1/5 Tue	1/2 Sat	1/15 Fri	1/11 Mon	1/10 Sun	1/3 Sun	1/3 Sun	1/11 Mon	1/15 Fri	1/17 Sun	1/19 Tue
MELL SENTOSA	032E	1/16 Sat	1/14 Thu	1/14 Thu	1/12 Tue	1/9 Sat	1/22 Fri	1/18 Mon	1/17 Sun	1/10 Sun	1/10 Sun	1/18 Mon	1/22 Fri	1/24 Sun	1/26 Tue
MELL SEMBAWANG	025E	1/23 Sat	1/21 Thu	1/21 Thu	1/19 Tue	1/16 Sat	1/29 Fri	1/25 Mon	1/24 Sun	1/17 Sun	1/17 Sun	1/25 Mon	1/29 Fri	1/31 Sun	2/2 Tue

Inbound from Asia	Voyage No.	ETA Guam	ETD Guam	ETA Saipan	ETA Yap	ETA Koror	ETA Davao	ETA GenSan	ETA Cebu	ETA Hongkong	ETA Kaoshiung	ETA Busan	ETA Yokohama	ETA Manila	ETA Singapore
MELL SERAPONG	002E	1/2 Sat	1/3 Sun	1/3 Sun	SKIP	1/6 Wed	1/8 Fri	1/10 Sun	SKIP	1/15 Fri	1/16 Sat	1/21 Thu	2/9 Tue	1/24 Sun	1/20 Wed
MELL SENTOSA	031E	1/9 Sat	1/10 Sun	1/10 Sun	1/12 Mon	1/13 Wed	1/15 Fri	1/17 Sun	SKIP	1/22 Fri	1/23 Sat	1/28 Thu	2/16 Tue	1/31 Sun	1/27 Wed
MELL SEMBAWANG	024E	1/16 Sat	1/17 Sun	1/17 Sun	SKIP	1/20 Wed	1/22 Fri	1/24 Sun	SKIP	1/29 Fri	1/30 Sat	2/4 Thu	2/23 Tue	2/7 Sun	2/3 Wed
MELL SERAPONG	003E	1/23 Sat	1/24 Sun	1/24 Sun	1/26 Mon	1/27 Wed	1/29 Fri	1/31 Sun	SKIP	2/5 Fri	2/6 Sat	2/11 Thu	3/2 Tue	2/14 Sun	2/10 Wed
MELL SENTOSA	032E	1/30 Sat	1/31 Sun	1/31 Sun	SKIP	2/3 Wed	2/5 Fri	2/7 Sun	SKIP	2/12 Fri	2/13 Sat	2/18 Thu	3/9 Tue	2/21 Sun	2/17 Wed
MELL SEMBAWANG	025E	2/6 Sat	2/7 Sun	2/7 Sun	2/9 Mon	2/10 Wed	2/12 Fri	2/14 Sun	SKIP	2/19 Fri	2/20 Sat	2/25 Thu	3/16 Tue	2/28 Sun	2/24 Wed

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PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Klynne Serrano, center, a twelfth-grader from the Marianas High School on Saipan, is presented with her $250 prize and certificate of recognition after being declared the primary winner in the Bank of Guam's Seventh Annual Calendar Photo Contest. Serrano's photo submission was chosen as the cover of the calendar. Serrano is joined in this photo by Marcie Tomokane, left, Bank of Guam's VP/CNMI regional manager, and Larry Philip, right, Bank of Guam AVP/Saipan branch manager.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Marcie Tomokane, left, Bank of Guam's VP/CNMI regional manager, and Larry Philip, right, Bank of Guam AVP/Saipan branch manager, present So Jung Song, an 11th grader from Saipan Southern High School, with $150 and a certificate of recognition after her entry in the bank's Seventh Annual Calendar Photo Contest was chosen for the month of June.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Marcie Tomokane, left, Bank of Guam's VP/CNMI regional manager, and Augustin Palacios, right, AVP/credit officer, present Jenequa Benavente, 12th grader from Marianas High School on Saipan, with $150 and a certificate of recognition after her entry in Bank of Guam's Seventh Annual Calendar Photo Contest was chosen for the month of July.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Justin Cabrera, center, a 12th grader from Marianas High School on Saipan, is presented with $150 and a certificate of recognition after his entry in Bank of Guam's Seventh Annual Calendar Photo Contest was chosen for the month of October. At left is Marcie Tomokane, Bank of Guam's VP/CNMI regional manager; at right is Larry Philip, AVP/Saipan branch manager. The Bank of Guam features the winning photos on its Web site www.bankofguam.com.

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Attorneys for Petitioner, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Estate of	]	Civil Action No. 09-0502
HAL BASILIO OGARTO TAITANO, aka MEL HAL BASILIO OGARTO TAITANO,	]	**NOTICE OF HEARING/ NOTICE TO CREDITORS**
Deceased.	]	

TO: THE HEIRS, GENERAL PUBLIC AND CREDITORS OF THE DECEDENT OR OF HIS ESTATE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Petitioner Commonwealth Utilities Corporation has filed a Petition for Letters of Administration in the above-entitled action.

A HEARING on the Petition for Letters of Administration will be conducted by the Court on February 2, 2010, at 1:30 p.m. in Courtroom 202A, CNMI Superior Court. All persons interested are hereby notified to appear at the hearing and show cause, if any, why the order appointing Concepcion Ogarto as Administratrix should not be made.

FURTHER NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to Rules 21 and 11 of the Commonwealth Rules of Probate, to all creditors of the decedent or his estate that they must file their claims with the Clerk of Court within sixty (60) days of the first publication of this notice. Any creditor's claims not filed within sixty (60) days shall be barred. A copy of the claim of any creditor should be sent to Deborah E. Fisher, counsel for Petitioner, at the above indicated address. Reference is hereby made to the Petition for Letters of Administration for further particulars.

Dated: December 16, 2009.

Clerk of Court

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB10-DPH-029

SUBMISSION / OPENING DATE: JANUARY 11, 2010 • TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF TWO (2) SERVERS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOWER BASE DR., SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THIS IS A FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECT; AS SUCH, LOCAL PREFERENCE IS NOT AVAILABLE, BECAUSE ITS USE IS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW GRANTING FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT.

/s/ **JOSEPH K.P. VILLAGOMEZ**
SECRETARY OF HEALTH

/s/ **HERMAN S. SABLAN**
Director, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB10-OHS-033

SUBMISSION/OPENING DATE: JANUARY 15, 2010
TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"YARD MAINTENANCE SERVICE FOR THE OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY BUILDING NO.1326 AND TRAINING CENTER BUILDING NO.1358"

COPIES OF THE SCOPE OF WORK MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOWER BASE DR., SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

PREFERENCE IS AVAILABLE TO U.S. CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS AS PER PUBLIC LAW 15-95 AND AS FURTHER AMENDED BY PUBLIC LAW 15-118 AND MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BID IF PREFERENCE IS CLAIMED.

/S/ PATRICK J. TENORIO
SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

COMMONWEALTH ZONING BOARD

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
for
TJ Amusements, Inc.

The public is invited to provide comments at a Zoning Board public hearing on this Conditional Use application #2009-2832, portion of Lot 013 D 42 (Garapan Fishing Base)

Date : January 6, 2010, Wednesday
Time : 5:30 pm
Place : Zoning Office, 2nd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan.

Above application may be viewed at the Zoning Office, 2nd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan. Comments on the projects may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing. Written comments may also be submitted in writing to the Zoning Office no later than 4:30 pm, January 7, 2010. Written comments may be submitted via e-mail to staff@zoning.gov.mp, via US mail to Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950, or delivered to the Zoning Office, 2nd floor, Joeten Building, DanDan, Saipan.

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the public hearing, or if you require assistance, please contact Victor Barrett, Zoning Administrator, at 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & Division 3 of Title 10 CMC).

/s/ Herminia M. Fusco, Board Chairperson

WELCOME HOME
The family and friends of Private First Class Andrew C. Sablan want to welcome him home for the holidays. Enjoy your R&R!

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Saipan Tribune

Business

Stocks edge higher as shoppers step up spending

AP

In this Dec. 26, 2009 file photo, Delores Simmons, of Dorchester Mass., stands next to her cart after shopping in Framingham, Mass. U.S. stock futures crept higher Monday, Dec. 28, 2009, as investors returning from a long holiday weekend were heartened by good news on retail sales.

NEW YORK (AP)—Better holiday sales and rising commodities prices pushed stocks to their sixth straight gain and new highs for 2009.

Major indexes edged higher in light trading Monday after sales figures showed shoppers spent more freely this holiday season, a sign that consumers are feeling better about the economy.

Figures from MasterCard Advisors' SpendingPulse, which track all forms of payment, show retail sales rose 3.6 percent from Nov. 1 through Dec. 24, after dropping during that time last year. Adjusting for an extra shopping day between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the number was closer to a 1 percent gain.

Consumer spending is one of the biggest drivers of economic growth and is important for a sustained recovery.

Meanwhile, commodities prices rose as the dollar fell, giving a boost to energy and materials stocks.

Airline stocks fell, helping to keep the market's gains in check, after two security incidents on Northwest flights over the weekend. The Dow Jones transportation average fell 0.6 percent.

With fewer traders in the market due to the holidays, and without any bad news, analysts say stocks are likely to drift higher during the final days of 2009.

"What's going to stop this is a question on a lot of people's minds," said Lawrence Creatura, portfolio manager at Federated Clover Investment Advisors. "And the answer so far is nothing." Markets were closed for Christmas and will be closed again Friday for New Year's Day.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 26.98, or 0.3 percent, to 10,547.08, its highest close since Oct. 1, 2008. The Dow transportation average fell 24.37, or 0.6 percent, to 4,163.49.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 1.30, or 0.1 percent, to 1,127.78, and the Nasdaq composite index advanced 5.39, or 0.2 percent, to 2,291.08.

Bond prices came off their lows after an auction of $44 billion of two-year notes saw sufficient demand. Bond prices have been falling in recent weeks, pushing yields higher as stocks continue to advance amid improving economic data.

In total, the Treasury Department is issuing $118 billion of debt this week. Investors have worried this year that demand for government debt would wane amid the massive amounts of supply. But so far, most auctions have gone smoothly.

The yield on the previously auctioned 10-year Treasury note, which moves opposite its price, rose to 3.85 percent from 3.80 percent Thursday.

Stocks added to moderate gains from last week, when the market rose following upbeat reports on unemployment and durable goods orders. This week, readings on home prices and consumer confidence are among the few economic reports expected.

Stocks have managed to grind higher throughout December, but the gains have been more subdued than in recent months as investors have held back on making big moves going into the end of the year. The S&P 500 index is up 66.7 percent since hitting a 12-year low in March.

AP: Ponzi collapses nearly quadrupled in '09

MIAMI (AP)—It was a rough year for Ponzi schemes. In 2009, the recession unraveled nearly four times as many of the investment scams as fell apart in 2008, with "Ponzi" becoming a buzzword again thanks to the collapse of Bernard Madoff's $50 billion plot.

Tens of thousands of investors, some of them losing their life's savings, watched more than $16.5 billion disappear like smoke in 2009, according to an Associated Press analysis of scams in all 50 states.

While the dollar figure was lower than in 2008, that's only because Madoff—who pleaded guilty earlier this year and is serving a 150-year prison sentence—was arrested in December 2008 and didn't count toward this year's total.

In all, more than 150 Ponzi schemes collapsed in 2009, compared to about 40 in 2008, according to the AP's examination of criminal cases at all U.S. attorneys' offices and the FBI, as well as criminal and civil actions taken by state prosecutors and regulators at both the federal and state levels.

The 2009 scams ranged in size from a few hundred thousand dollars to the $7 billion bogus international banking empire authorities say jailed financier Allen Stanford orchestrated, as well as the $1.2 billion scheme they say was operated by disbarred Florida lawyer Scott Rothstein. Both have pleaded not guilty.

While enforcement efforts have ramped up—in large part because of the discovery of Madoff's fraud, estimated at $21 billion to $50 billion—the main reason so many Ponzi schemes have come to light is clear.

"The financial meltdown has resulted in the exposure of numerous fraudulent schemes that otherwise might have gone undetected for a longer period of time," said Lanny Breuer, assistant attorney general for the U.S. Justice Department's criminal division.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Storms, falling supply drives energy prices up

NEW YORK (AP)—Oil prices rose above $79 barrel Monday for the first time in four weeks as an extended cold snap triggered an end-of-year rally in energy futures. Benchmark crude for February delivery added 72 cents to settle at $78.77 a barrel in light, holiday trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Prices rose as high as $79.12 earlier in the day, the highest since Nov. 18. Futures contracts for oil, natural gas and heating oil have all become more expensive this month as snow storms blanketed parts of the country and a sharp drop in supplies of crude and other fuels surprised traders.

Audi plans euro7.3 billion investments through 2012

FRANKFURT (AP)—Audi AG said Monday it plans to spend euro7.3 billion ($10.51 billion) on plant upgrades, new products and technology research as it moves to expand its number of customers worldwide and increase market share. Audi, based in Ingolstadt, and a unit of Volkswagen AG, said it plans to spend that amount from 2009 to 2012 and will increase the number of models from its current 34 to a planned 42 by 2015. Of the investment, about euro5.9 billion will go toward new products and future technologies, or about 80 percent of its planned spending.

Zions nixes executive bonuses, replaces with stock

NEW YORK (AP)—Zions Bancorp. is cutting out cash bonuses for its executives this year to comply with standards under the federal bailout program. In a regulatory filing Monday, the regional bank based in Salt Lake City said its board changed the compensation arrangements for its executive officers. It will grant "salary stock" to its executives for 2010 instead of cash bonuses. Zions said the change is being made to comply with the rules under the federal government's Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP. Zions got $1.4 billion in TARP funds.

Invitation to Bid ITB10-GOV-035

Security Services for Water Task Force Drill Rig

Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Eloy S. Inos, through the Water Task Force, are soliciting sealed Bids for Security Services for the Water Task Force Drill Rig on Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project Scope of Work will be available at the Office of the Director, Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, on or after **December 23, 2009.**

A mandatory Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for **10:00 a.m.** local time, **January 11, 2010**, at the CNMI Water **Task Force Conference Room, 1316 Anatahan Dr., Capitol Hill, Saipan.**

All questions regarding this ITB must be submitted in writing no later than **4:30 pm, January 8, 2010,** to Mr. Pedro Sasamoto, WTF Program Manager, facsimile number (670) 664-2279.

Bids must be sealed and marked **"ITB10-GOV-035"**. For bidders within the CNMI, one (1) original and four (4) copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, no later than **3:00 p.m.** local time, **January 22, 2010.** Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their bid by submitting a Notice of Intent to Bid. Notices of Intent to Bid must be received by the Director of Procurement & Supply no later than **3:00 p.m.** local time, **January 22, 2010,** and may be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515. For bidders located outside the CNMI, one (1) original and four (4) copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **January 22, 2010,** and must be received no later than **February 4, 2010.** Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be opened at the Office of Procurement and Supply on **February 4, 2010** if bids are receive from outside the CNMI or on **January 25, 2010** if all bids are from within the CNMI.

The bid procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations. Preference is not available to local bidders in this procurement because its use is prohibited by the Federal law granting the funds for this project.

The CNMI reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any imperfections in any bid if to do so will be in the best interest of the CNMI. All bids shall become the property of the CNMI government.

BENIGNO R. FITIAL
Governor

HERMAN S. SABLAN
Director, Procurement & Supply

Nation

Obama vows to use power to thwart terrorists

HONOLULU (AP)—President Barack Obama on Monday vowed to use "every element of our national power" to keep Americans safe and said the failed Christmas Day plot to blow up a Detroit-bound airliner was "a serious reminder" of the need to continually adapt security measures against changing terrorist threats.

But even as Obama spoke, word came that a State Department warning had failed to trigger an effort to revoke the alleged attacker's visa. And officials in Yemen confirmed that the would-be bomber had been living in that country, where terrorist elements quickly sought to take credit for his actions.

The incident prompted stiffer airport boarding measures and authorities warned holiday travelers to expect extra delays as they return home this week and beyond.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, 23, charged with trying to destroy an aircraft, is being held at the federal prison in Milan, Mich. A court hearing that had been scheduled for Monday to determine whether the government can get DNA from him was postponed until Jan. 8. No reason was given.

Calling Abdulmutallab's action an "attempted act of terrorism" Obama vowed to "do everything that we can to keep America safe" and declared: "The United States will more than simply strengthen our defenses. We will continue to use every element of our national power to disrupt, to dismantle and defeat the violent extremists who threaten us."

AP

President Barack Obama speaks to the media about the recent air travel incident, Monday, Dec. 28, 2009, at the Marine Corps Base Hawaii at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

Members of Congress, meanwhile, questioned how a man flagged as a possible terrorist managed to board a commercial flight into the United States carrying powerful explosives and nearly bring down the jetliner. Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., said Monday that the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee that he chairs would hold hearings in January.

Meanwhile, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula claimed responsibility for the thwarted attack as retaliation for a U.S. operation against the group in Yemen. Yemeni forces, helped by U.S. intelligence, carried out two airstrikes against al-Qaida operatives this month in the lawless country that is fast becoming a key front in the war on terror. The second one was a day before Abdulmutallab attempted to bring down a Northwest Airlines flight as it prepared to land in Detroit.

Yemen has long been an al-Qaida stomping ground. But officials fear that deepening instability in the Middle Eastern nation may be giving new opportunity for the terror group to establish a base to train and plan for attacks on the West.

A statement posted on the Internet by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula said Abdulmutallab coordinated with members of the group and used explosives manufactured by al-Qaida members.

Solving one mystery of Abdulmutallab's pre-Detroit path, the Yemeni Foreign Ministry said Monday that he was in Yemen from August until early December. He had received a visa to study Arabic in a school in San'a. Citing immigration authorities, the statement said Abdulmutallab had previously studied at the school, indicating it was not his first trip to Yemen.

Obama, on vacation in his birthplace of Hawaii, acknowledged the attack showed the need to increase the United States' defenses. He detailed the pair of reviews that he has ordered to determine whether changes are needed in either the watchlist system or airport screening procedures.

"This was a serious reminder of the dangers that we face," he said. "It's absolutely critical that we learn from this incident."

Obama's remarks Monday were the first heard from him on the Christmas Day scare three days earlier.

Officials said that was deliberate—an effort by the White House to balance the need for the president to show concern but also to not unduly elevate a botched incident and thereby encourage other would-be attackers.

Back in Washington, federal officials met to review their layered system of watchlists and other procedures to examine how to avoid the type of lapses that led to the attack.

Confusion fills skies after attempted bombing

CHICAGO (AP)—You are now free to move about the cabin. Or not.

After a two-day security clampdown prompted by a thwarted attempt to bomb a jetliner, some airline officials told The Associated Press that the in-flight restrictions had been eased. And it was now up to captains on each flight to decide whether passengers can have blankets and other items on their laps or can move around during the final phase of flight.

Confused? So were scores of passengers who flew Monday on one of the busiest travel days of the year. On some flights, passengers were told to keep their hands visible and not to listen to iPods. Even babies were frisked. But on other planes, security appeared no tighter than usual.

The Transportation Security Administration did little to explain the rules. And that inconsistency might well have been deliberate: What's confusing to passengers is also confusing to potential terrorists.

"It keeps them guessing," transportation expert Joseph Schwieterman said.

By not making public a point-by-point list of new security rules, federal officials also retain more flexibility, the DePaul University professor added, enabling them to target responses to certain airports or flights seen as more vulnerable.

"There was criticism after 9-11 that rules could be way too cookbook—not allowing authorities to adapt them to different settings, to different airports," Schwieterman said.

If the objective was to befuddle, then on Monday it was mission accomplished.

On one Air Canada flight from Toronto to New York's LaGuardia Airport, crew members told passengers before departure that they were not allowed to use any electronic devices—even iPods—and would not be able to access their personal belongings during the one-hour flight.

The questions came as President Barack Obama ordered a review of air-safety regulations. TSA spokeswoman Sterling Payne declined to offer details other than to say the agency would "continually review and update these measures to ensure the highest level of security."

An hour before a US Air flight from Manchester, England, to Philadelphia landed, flight attendants removed passengers' blankets and told them to keep their "hands visible," said passenger Walt Swanson of Cumbria, England.

Even bathroom visits were affected on some flights.

Health bills nudge US on long-term care insurance

CHICAGO (AP)—Most people don't buy long-term care insurance. They simply don't want to think about moving into an assisted living center or hiring a stranger to bathe them.

Seven years ago, Robert Myers of suburban Chicago did buy long-term care insurance. Myers' wife, who died in December 2008, needed care as she fought cancer.

"It was a godsend," Myers, 64, an Episcopal priest, says of the insurance. "It didn't cover everything, but it broke the back of the bills."

Unlike Myers, most people may want to plan for the future, but they need a nudge to overcome their avoidance and laziness. At least that's the assumption behind a program tucked into the health care overhaul legislation emerging from Congress.

The program would create a voluntary long-term care insurance program to be run by the government.

Voluntary, yes. But workers at participating companies would be automatically enrolled—critics say "tricked into" enrolling—unless they opted out. People would see a deduction for the program from their paychecks—estimates range from $160 to $240 a month—unless they signed a form or clicked a box saying they wanted to keep the money.

The proposed program would help shift the financial burden of an aging population from Medicaid, now the largest funder of long-term care, to individuals. The federal-state health insurance program for the poor is straining state budgets.

Fewer law enforcement officers died on job in 2009

WASHINGTON (AP)—Law enforcement deaths this year dropped to their lowest level since 1959, while the decade of the 2000s was among the safest for officers—despite the deadliest single day for police on Sept. 11, 2001.

The drop in deaths, cited in a police group's report Monday, was tempered by an increase in firearm deaths. In one horrific November shooting, four officers were executed as they discussed their upcoming shift in a Lakewood, Wash., coffee shop.

Through Dec. 27, the report by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund found:

■ 124 officers were killed this year, compared to 133 in 2008. The 2009 total represents the fewest line-of-duty deaths since 108 a half-century ago.

■ Traffic fatalities fell to 56, compared to 71 a year ago. The report said the decline was partly attributed to "move over" state laws, which require motorists to change lanes to give officers clearance on the side of a road.

■ Firearms deaths rose to 48, nine more than in 2008. However, the 39 fatalities in 2008 represented the lowest annual figure in more than five decades.

■ Thirty-five states and Puerto Rico had officer fatalities in 2009, with Texas the only state in double figures. Texas had 11 fatalities, followed by Florida, 9; California, 8; and North Carolina and Pennsylvania, 7.

■ Six federal officers died in 2009, including three Drug Enforcement Administration special agents killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan while conducting counter-narcotics operations.

■ One female officer was killed in 2009, compared with 13 the previous year. There was no explanation for the decline.

■ An average of 162 officers a year died in the 2000s, compared with 160 in the 1990s, 190 in the 1980s and 228 in the 1970s—the deadliest decade for U.S. law enforcement. Seventy-two officers died on Sept. 11.

ACROSS THE NATION

Miss. apartment fire kills 6 children, 3 women

STARKVILLE, Miss. (AP)—Fire gutted an apartment in a rundown complex Monday, killing three women and six children, including several family members taken in because they had nowhere else to go, officials and neighbors said. The West Memorial Funeral Home identified the victims as India Williams, 25, and her three children, along with Williams's cousin, Castella "Maria" Bell, 18, and her three children. The ninth victim was 20-year-old Lakesha Gillespie, identified by the funeral home as a friend. The children were ages 6 months to 6 years. Latasha Brown, who lives downstairs, said she never heard smoke detectors, but a neighbor banged on her door around 4 a.m. to tell her to get out. She grabbed her 3-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter and ran barefoot into the cold.

Mom fights to be buried with soldier son

WASHINGTON (AP)—Denise Anderson lost her only son in the Iraq war. She's determined not to lose her fight to be buried with him in a national veterans cemetery. Army Spc. Corey Shea died Nov. 12, 2008, in Mosul, with one about a month left on his tour of duty in Iraq. He was buried at the Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne, about 50 miles from his hometown of Mansfield, Mass. A grieving Anderson, 42, soon hit an obstacle in her quest to be buried in the same plot with her son. That chance is offered only to the spouses or children of dead veterans; Corey Shea was 21, single and childless. The Veterans Affairs Department grants waivers and has approved four similar requests from dead soldiers' parents since 2005.

Asia

Diver finds 12 bodies in RP ferry wreckage

AP

This photo released by the Philippine Coast Guard shows a rescue ship scours for missing passengers from the sunken MV Baleno-9 near Verde Island off Batangas province, south of Manila, on Sunday, Dec. 27, 2009.

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A coast guard auxiliary diver found at least 12 bodies, including two toddlers, inside the wreckage of a wooden-hulled ferry that sank near Manila on Christmas Eve, officials said Monday.

The bodies of the rest of the 24 people missing may be trapped inside still-unopened cabins of MV *Catalyn B*, which collided with a fishing boat and sank off Cavite province's Limbones island before dawn Thursday, said coast guard spokesman Armand Balilo.

He said the search continues for MV *Catalyn B*'s missing passengers as well as 23 people missing from another ferry that sank off nearby Batangas province late Saturday in the second sea disaster in three days.

Matthew Caldwell, an American technical diver and an auxiliary diver of the ill-equipped Philippine coast guard, said he saw the bodies throughout the wreckage of MV *Catalyn B*, which sank at a depth of more than 67 meters (221 feet) after the Christmas Eve collision.

"From different windows, you see different bodies," he told The Associated Press. "There could very well be more, because I understand there are small cabins inside and most likely there were people sleeping in the cabin and never had the chance to get out."

The coast guard lacks trained people and equipment to dive to such depths and has tapped Caldwell, a longtime Philippine resident, to conduct the deep-sea search, Admiral Wilfredo Tamayo, the coast guard chief, said earlier.

Caldwell said the coast guard is now exploring alternatives to be able to recover the bodies, including possibly salvaging the whole boat.

Search-and-rescue teams, meanwhile, continue to comb waters near Verde Island off Batangas province, south of Manila, for at least 23 people missing from the second ferry, MV *Baleno-9*.

Suicide attack on Pakistani Shiites kills 33

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP)—The death toll from an overnight suicide attack on a Shiite Muslim procession in Pakistan's biggest city rose Tuesday to 33, in violence blamed on extremists trying to hamper the fight against militants by sparking a sectarian war.

Angered over Monday's attack, Shiites set fire to buildings and dozens of vehicles in Karachi, a sign of frustration by the minority sect, which has suffered frequent attacks by Sunni extremist groups who regard them as heretical.

TV footage showed firefighters struggling to extinguish blazes Tuesday. Sagheer Ahmed, the provincial health minister, said the death toll from the attack had risen to 33. Pakistani television stations said that three people who were hospitalized died overnight of their injuries.

Pakistani authorities say sectarian groups have teamed up with Taliban and al-Qaida militants waging war against the government in a joint effort to destabilize Pakistan. More than 500 people have been killed in attacks since mid-October when the army launched a major anti-Taliban offensive in the country's northwest.

"A deliberate attempt seems to be afoot by the extremists to turn the fight against militants into a sectarian clash and make the people fight against one another," said President Asif Ali Zardari in a statement.

ASIAN BRIEFS

China confirms Briton's execution, despite UK plea

URUMQI, China (AP)—China brushed aside international appeals Tuesday and executed a British man convicted of drug smuggling whose relatives say was mentally unstable and unwittingly lured into the crime. Britain's prime minister condemned the execution—China's first of a European citizen in nearly 60 years. "I condemn the execution of Akmal Shaikh in the strongest terms, and am appalled and disappointed that our persistent requests for clemency have not been granted. I am particularly concerned that no mental health assessment was undertaken," Prime Minister Gordon Brown said in a statement issued by the Foreign Office. The press office of the Xinjiang region where Shaikh had been held confirmed the execution in a faxed statement.

North Korea: American detained after illegal entry

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea said Tuesday it has detained an American who entered the country illegally, after activists claimed that a 28-year-old from Arizona went to the communist nation on a mission to call attention to the regime's human rights abuses. The American was being investigated after "illegally entering" the country through the North Korea-China border last Thursday, North Koreas's official Korean Central News Agency said in a two-line dispatch. The report did not identify the American, but activists believe he is 28-year-old Christian missionary Robert Park, who they say slipped across the frozen Tumen River into North Korea from China on Christmas bearing letters calling for a change in North Korea's leadership and an end to political prison camps.

Thai troops deport 4,000 Hmong to Laos

PHETCHABUN, Thailand (AP)—Thai troops packed more than 4,000 ethnic Hmong into military trucks for a one-way journey to Laos, all but ending the Hmong's three-decade search for asylum following their alliance with the U.S. during the Vietnam War. The United States and rights groups have said the Hmong could be in danger if returned to the country that they fought, unsuccessfully, to keep from falling into communist hands in the 1970s. The European Union said it was "deeply dismayed" by the forcible deportation and issued a statement that urged Laos to ensure the Hmongs' human rights are protected and international observers are granted "unfettered access" to them.

World

Iran holds bodies of slain protesters

CAIRO (AP)—Iranian authorities said Monday that they were holding the bodies of five slain anti-government protesters, including the nephew of the opposition leader, in what appeared to be an attempt to prevent activists from using their funerals as a platform for more demonstrations.

Pro-reform Web sites and activists said the government also detained at least eight prominent opposition figures—including a former foreign minister—in an intensified crackdown that could fuel more violence of the kind that engulfed the center of Tehran on Sunday. The activity pushed the bitterly opposed camps beyond any immediate prospect of reconciliation or compromise.

Hardliners, including clerical groups and the elite Revolutionary Guard, issued statements urging the country's judiciary to take action against the opposition for violating Islamic principles and insulting the head of Iran's religious leadership, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In the bloodiest protests in months, groups of emboldened demonstrators on Sunday chanted slogans against Khamenei, casting aside a taboo on personal criticism of the leader. In outbursts of fury rarely seen in past street confrontations, they burned squad cars and motorcycles belonging to security forces who had opened fire on the crowds, according to witness accounts, opposition Web sites and amateur videos posted on the Web.

"I believe we are moving toward a more militarized and repressive confrontation. Things are going to get worse," said Ahmad Bakhshayesh, a political science professor at Tehran's Allameh Tabatabaei University.

IRNA, Iran's state-run news agency, said the bodies of five protesters, including the nephew of opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, were being held pending autopsies. The family of the nephew, Ali Mousavi, alleged that he was shot by security forces or government-backed militiamen, and his funeral would likely galvanize another outpouring of opposition anger.

UK says plane bomb suspect on routine watchlist

LONDON (AP)—The man accused of trying to blow up a U.S.-bound airliner was not flagged in Britain as a potential terror suspect—he was merely put on a standard watch list of people whose visa applications were rejected, British officials said Monday.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian who had graduated from a London university last year, had his subsequent visa application denied in May 2009. Government officials said the school on his application form was not a government-approved institution.

People who have visa applications refused in the U.K. are placed on a watchlist, which is then divided into different categories depending on the risk they pose to Britain. Abdulmutallab's name was placed on the list as a matter of routine, not because he was thought to pose a threat, according to a spokeswoman for the Home Office who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with government policy.

She added that there are some 2,000 schools in Britain accredited to receive international students, and that the school Abdulmutallab had claimed to enroll in was not one of them. Citing security reasons, the spokeswoman refused to reveal the institution's name or location of the college but said the institution is being investigated by authorities.

Gay marriage in Argentina is 1st in Latin America

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP)—Two Argentine men were joined Monday in Latin America's first same-sex marriage, traveling to the southernmost tip of the Americas to find welcoming spot to wed.

Gay rights activists Jose Maria Di Bello and Alex Freyre were married in Ushauaia, the capital of Argentina's Tierra del Fuego state, in a ceremony witnessed by state and federal officials.

"My knees didn't stop shaking," Di Bello said. "We are the first gay couple in Latin America to marry."

The couple had previously tried to marry in the Argentine capital of Buenos Aires but were thwarted by city officials citing conflicting judicial rulings. Argentina's Constitution is silent on whether marriage must be between a man and a woman, effectively leaving the matter to state and city officials.

Tierra del Fuego Gov. Fabiana Rios said in a statement that gay marriage "is an important advance in human rights and social inclusion and we are very happy that this has happened in our state."

An official representing the federal government's antidiscrimination agency, Claudio Morgado, attended the wedding in the city of Ushauaia and called the occasion "historic."

WORLD BRIEFS

Venezuela's Chavez accuses Colombia, US of plot

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)—President Hugo Chavez is accusing Colombia and the United States of plotting to set up a fake rebel camp on Venezuelan soil to discredit his government. Chavez accused Colombia of preparing what he called a "false positive" operation, saying on Monday that it's feasible the neighboring country could build a makeshift camp in a remote location, then plant corpses and guns to make it look like a rebel camp had been discovered. Colombian officials have said that leftist rebel commanders from their country are taking refuge in Venezuela. Chavez says the officials are falsely trying to portray him as being in cahoots with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, which Colombia has been battling for decades.

Israel to build 700 apartments in east Jerusalem

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP)—Israel announced Monday it is building nearly 700 new apartments for Jews in east Jerusalem, where Palestinians hope to set up the capital of a future state. The U.S., Palestinians and the European Union condemned the plan, a fresh setback to American efforts to restart Mideast peace talks. The Palestinians have said they will not resume talks without an Israeli settlement freeze, and criticized what they said was another show of bad faith by Israel. "With each individual action it undertakes on the ground, Israel is saying no to meaningful negotiations," said Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat.

Al-Qaida in Yemen expands operations

CAIRO (AP)—Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which claimed responsibility for the attempted attack on a U.S. airliner bound for Detroit, is led by a Yemeni who was once a close aide to Osama bin Laden. The group formed in January this year, when leader Naser Abdel Karim al-Wahishi announced a merger between operatives from Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Al-Wahishi, who goes by the alias Abu Basir, was among 23 al-Qaida figures who escaped from a Yemeni prison in 2006. He is on Saudi Arabia's most wanted list, which includes many militants currently in Yemen.

Campus Life

Fewer students interested in working in, not just on, computers

By MICHAEL ALISON CHANDLER
(C) 2009, THE WASHINGTON POST

Computer science teacher Ann Blocksom works on a problem with senior Claudia Gutierrez at Stone Bridge High School in Ashburn, Va. Nationwide, school officials are worried that few students are interested in working in, not just on, computers.

THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—It would be hard to find a student at Stone Bridge High School who has never used the Internet for a research assignment, socialized with Facebook or played a video game.

But few know much about how computers and the Web actually work.

About 70 students at the school in suburban Loudoun County, are taking introductory or Advanced Placement courses this year in computer science, getting a glimpse behind the games and Web sites they use all the time.

For 1 1/2 hours, they enter a bracket-and-parentheses-laced world and practice speaking and writing in Java and C+. If they stick with it, they will be part of an elite group that is exceedingly employable, economists say, even in a recession.

In suburban Loudoun County, sometimes called the Silicon Valley of the East, fewer than 5 percent of all high school students took a computer science class in each of the past three years, and the numbers are slipping slightly.

Nationally, the portion of schools that offer an introductory computer science course has dropped from 78 percent in 2005 to 65 percent this year, and the corresponding decline in AP courses went from 40 to 27 percent, according to a survey by the Computer Science Teachers Association.

In the spring, the College Board, citing declining enrollment, canceled its AP computer science AB class, the more rigorous of its two courses in the subject.

The result of sporadic or skimpy computer science training is that a generation of teenagers great at using computers will be unlikely to play a role in the way computer technology shapes lives in the future, said Chris Stephenson, executive director of the New York-based Computer Science Teachers Association.

"Their knowledge of technology is very broad but very shallow," she said.

That has economic implications. "If you look at history, the nations with economic superiority are building the tools the rest of the world is using," Stephenson said.

The slide in computer science education is surprising at a time when politicians are bent on fueling innovation by sharpening the math, science and technology skills of the future workforce.

Stephenson said computer science classes might be an unintentional casualty in the push to increase academic standards. Computer science is not considered a core subject by the No Child Left Behind law, which influences school priorities and budgets.

That makes them vulnerable to cuts, and computer science teachers are often reassigned to teach core math or science classes. As states increase high school graduation requirements in core subjects, students have less time for electives. Some states have tried to increase enrollment in computer science classes by allowing them to count as math credits.

Computer industry leaders and policymakers are trying to raise awareness about the field. This fall, the House of Representatives passed a resolution creating Computer Science Education Week, which began Dec. 6.

John White, chief executive of the Association for Computing Machinery, marked the occasion with a YouTube video that explains why the number of jobs for software engineers and network systems analysts is growing fast.

"Computing is fueling countless advances, from improving communications and advancing health care to protecting national security and improving energy efficiency to helping understand the depths of the universe," White said.

At Stone Bridge recently, a handful of teens sat in a row along a wall, illuminated by six white computer screens filled with code. Their task was to create a "high/low" game by programming the computer to guess a number between one and 100 with the fewest possible guesses.

Teacher Ann Blocksom said she sometimes visits math classes to encourage more students to sign up for computer science. Many students don't understand what computer science is or what they can do with it, she said.

Shanice Proctor, 16, one of two girls in the class, said she signed up for AP computer science because she thought it would help her "think on a higher level."

She also likes the immediacy of computer science: "Algebra has been around for a long time. This field is actually changing. It's new. ... That makes it cool."

Life & Style

Sheen's wife claims he held knife to her throat

By DAN ELLIOTT
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

DENVER (AP)—Charlie Sheen's wife told police the actor pinned her on a bed, put a knife to her throat and threatened to kill her in a Christmas Day fight in Aspen that began when she said she wanted a divorce.

An arrest warrant affidavit released Monday quotes Brooke Mueller Sheen as saying that the actor straddled her on a bed with one hand grasping her neck and the other holding the knife. She said Sheen told her: "You better be in fear. If you tell anybody, I'll kill you."

He also told her, "Your mother's money means nothing, I have ex-police I can hire who know how to get the job done and they won't leave any trace," according to the affidavit.

The 44-year-old Sheen denied threatening his wife with a knife or choking her, and told officers they had slapped each other on the arms and that he had snapped two pairs of her eyeglasses in front of her, according to the affidavit. An ambulance was sent to the house in Aspen, but police say no one was taken to the hospital.

Charlie Sheen, who is listed in the affidavit as Carlos Irwin Estevez, told police he and his wife have been having marital problems and that she abuses alcohol.

AP
In this Sunday, Sept. 20, 2009, picture, actor Charlie Sheen, right, and wife Brooke Mueller arrive at the 61st Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles.

No phone listing could be found for Brooke Sheen, and it wasn't clear whether she has an attorney. The affidavit refers to her as Brooke Mueller.

Sheen was arrested on suspicion of menacing, second-degree assault and criminal mischief. The affidavit also lists a charge of domestic violence, which authorities had not previously mentioned. Sheen is free on $8,500 bond. His lawyer and his agent didn't immediately return calls on Monday.

The couple began arguing around 3:30 a.m. on Christmas Day, the affidavit said. Brooke Sheen told her husband she wanted a divorce and would get custody of their children, according to the affidavit. The couple have twin boys born in March.

Charlie Sheen told police he "became very upset with this threat (of divorce) because of prior experiences." He went through a bitter divorce and custody battle with his previous wife, actress Denise Richards.

A woman who identified herself as "Brooke" and said she was Sheen's wife called 911 around 8:30 a.m.

In an audio recording of the call released Monday, the woman can be heard weeping and sometimes her words are inaudible. At one point she said: "My husband had me (inaudible) with um, with a knife, and (inaudible) he threatened me." Later, she said, "I thought I was gonna die for one hour."

Police say Charlie Sheen surrendered a folding knife with a 4-inch blade.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Arnold Mordkin said Monday the menacing charge is the most serious, usually carrying a sentence of two to eight years in prison and a fine of $2,000 to $500,000. Mordkin said Sheen's next court appearance is Feb. 8, and no decision on whether to prosecute him is expected until shortly before that.

Charlie Sheen stars in CBS' "Two and a Half Men" and Brooke Mueller Sheen is a real estate investor. The couple married in May 2008.

ASPEN, Colorado. (AP) — Prosecutors say they probably won't decide until February whether to file charges against actor Charlie Sheen in an alleged domestic violence case in Aspen.

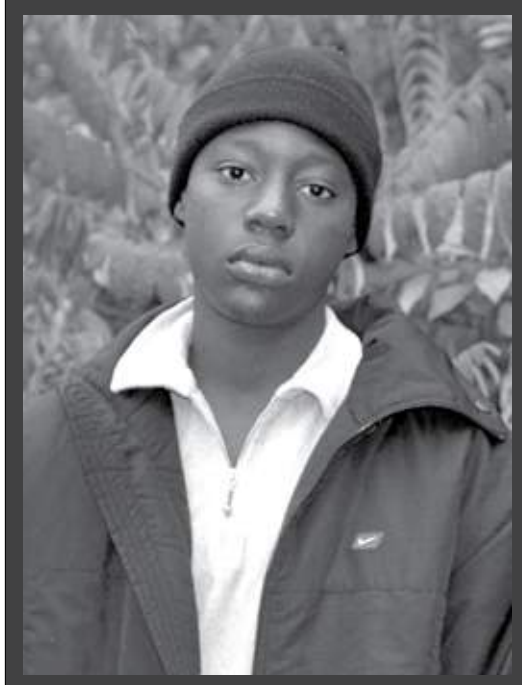
Sheen was arrested Christmas Day on suspicion of menacing, second-degree assault and criminal mischief. Authorities haven't identified the alleged victim.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Arnold Mordkin said Monday the menacing charge is the most serious, usually carrying a sentence of two to eight years in prison and a fine of $2,000 to $500,000.

Mordkin says Sheen's next court appearance is Feb. 8, and no decision on whether to prosecute him is expected until shortly before that.

The 44-year-old star of "Two and a Half Men" is free on $8,500 bond. His lawyer didn't immediately return a call Monday.

MSNBC criticized for response to terrorism story



AP
In this undated image made available on Monday Dec. 28 2009 by teacher Mike Rimmer, Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab poses for a picture while he was a pupil at the International school, Lome, Togo.

NEW YORK (AP)—MSNBC spent considerable time Monday reporting on the aftermath of an attempted Christmas Day attack on a Detroit-bound airliner, but its executives didn't want to talk about why the story received little attention as it was breaking.

Competitors CNN and Fox News Channel gave much more extensive attention to the story on Christmas night as MSNBC stuck with taped programs on a murder mystery and environmental issues, along with an "undercover" report on the teenage sex trade.

MSNBC has been criticized in the past for failing to respond quickly to breaking news during off-hours, a choice that may complicate its efforts to be seen as a go-to news source. The network is revamping its daytime schedule to be more news-oriented than personality-driven, since the latter approach has proven to be a ratings failure.

On Christmas, an anchor did live cut-ins about once an hour to pass on news of the attempted terrorism, said Jeremy Gaines, network spokesman.

Fox mixed live coverage of the story Friday night with a taped year-end retrospective show with Bill O'Reilly. CNN devoted virtually all of its prime-time hours to the incident, its coverage anchored by Ali Velshi.

Neither Gaines nor Phil Griffin, MSNBC's top executive, would discuss the judgment call on Monday.

MSNBC's choice was noted by Rachel Sklar, a blogger for the Mediaite Web site: "If you're going to call yourself a news network, then cover the news," she wrote.

MSNBC faced similar criticism earlier this year when it stuck with taped programming during a weekend that other networks were covering protests over the election in Iran. CNN and Fox similarly stayed with the live story longer during the terrorist attacks in India last year.

At the time of the Iran protests, the Daily Kos Web site wrote: "What are they, a high school radio station left on autopilot from Friday night to Monday morning? ... If MSNBC wants to be a force, when will they wake up?"

For its part, MSNBC has noted that its long-form taped programming have been successful in the ratings during weekends.

Academy library hosts new members of movie history

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—For 81 years, she has amassed movie memorabilia. Her collection now includes more than 10 million photographs, 80,000 screenplays and 35,000 movie posters dating back to when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was founded in 1927.

So it's fitting that the Margaret Herrick Library played host to the future of the film industry when it welcomed this year's crop of Oscar voters at a private reception honoring the newest members of the academy.

Surrounded by movie history, these new members celebrated becoming part of it.

"This organization first handed out awards in 1929 and I'm connected to that," said David Kaminow, who just joined the public relations branch. "It's having an attachment to the history of movies."

"We're part of the fabric of this industry," added fellow new member Sal Ladestro, who said his mother cried when he told her he was becoming an academy member "because it's that kind of important."

The library was the ideal setting for celebrating new members of the academy, said president Tom Sherak.

"The foundation for this organization is the history of movies, and when you become a member, you become part of that history," he said.

And that includes academy members influencing history by determining who will win Academy Awards—a process that began for the 82nd time on Monday when Oscar ballots went out to 5,777 academy members—including the 133 newest voters—who will collectively select the year's Oscar nominees and eventual winners.

AP
In this photo taken Thursday, Sept. 17, 2009, members walk around the library during a reception for new member at the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Sherak gave the voting rookies some simple advice on how to handle the responsibility: Be conscientious.

"This is something we do that the whole world pays attention to and we need to take it very seriously," he said.

Each of the academy's 15 branches is responsible for nominating those in their field—so actors nominate actors and sound engineers nominate sound engineers—based on the year's eligible films. (There were 274 in 2009.) The entire voting membership submits their picks for best picture.

Sherak reminded them that the category is now twice the size it used to be: 10 nominees instead of five.

"You've joined in a tough year, because we've made it twice as hard to fill out the ballot," he said.

Ballots are due to PricewaterhouseCoopers on Jan. 23, 2010. Nominations will be announced Feb. 2 and the Academy Awards will be presented March 7.

Voting on the Oscars will be exciting, said Oscar-winning documentarian Megan Mylan. But being officially connected to the history of film as a member of the academy is even more profound.

"It's cool that they have all of this archival stuff because it does make you have an elevated level of respect for the work you're doing," she said. "I can see that there's something that I have in common with these grand storytellers... To sit here and read these names—and to think anything you do might have something to do with that—it's very heady to think about."

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Avatar's" opening underscores a strong year for Stephen Lang, who also has been seen on the big screen in "The Men Who Stare at Goats" and "Public Enemies."

'Avatar's' tough guy
Stephen Lang pulls rank

By GEOFF BOUCHER

(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES

If you bump into actor Stephen Lang, don't make the mistake of praising him as the best movie villain of 2009 for his predatory performance as Col. Miles Quaritch in "Avatar."

"I didn't play a villain; I played a man who is doing his job the best way that he can," the 57-year-old actor said with an edge in his voice. "He makes choices. Quaritch has cauterized some aspects of his own soul. Dirty wars have numbed his psyche and spirit. But I did not go at him as a villain."

Parts of Quaritch may be dead inside, but Lang's performance is alive on the screen. With an ice-blue stare, talon-scarred face and sinewy arms, Quaritch is one of the most memorable special effects in the James Cameron sci-fi epic, which pulled in an estimated $232.2 million worldwide in its opening weekend.

The years-in-the-making film hit theaters at midnight Thursday, billed as "the game-changer" for visual effects movies and, along with the commercial success, the reviews have been mostly as glowing as the iridescent plant life of Pandora.

Despite its 3-D wizardry and state-of-the-art performance-capture technology, the off-world epic is an old-fashioned story in many ways. Sam Worthington stars as Jake Sully, a military man who "goes native" on a distant moon called Pandora, where 10-foot-tall, blue-skinned aliens called Na'vi are struggling to fight off human invaders.

Leading the charge for those invaders is the brawny Quaritch, the head of security for Hell's Gate, the Earthling base that has been set up to mine a super-valuable mineral unique to Pandora.

"Quaritch is number-orientated, he's very squared away, and there's nothing raggedy about him at all," said Lang, who has a history of playing military men on screen. "He is in a constant state of Code Red."

In cinema spirit, Quaritch could compare scars with Tom Berenger's possessed Sgt. Barnes in "Platoon" or march along in lock-step with R. Lee Ermey's sneering Sgt. Hartman in "Full Metal Jacket." Remember how Lt. Col. Bill Kilgore, as portrayed by Robert Duvall, loved the smell of napalm in the morning in "Apocalypse Now"? Watching Lang's Quaritch serenely sip his coffee during the slaughter of an alien tribe in "Avatar" suggests that he orders off the same commando breakfast menu.

Lang has been "chameleonic" in his film career, as director Cameron puts it, and in a way that has given him a certain measure of anonymity with moviegoers.

Whether the role was Ike Clanton in "Tombstone," Harry Black in "Last Exit to Brooklyn" or a Civil War icon (he played Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson in "Gods and Generals" and Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett in "Gettysburg"), Lang is more of an actor than a movie star.

Cameron said he had been watching Lang for quite a while before casting him. He took note of Lang's lead performance in the 1986 crime film "Band of the Hand" and considered him for one of the military-man roles in "Aliens," released that year.

For "Avatar," Lang secured the role of Quaritch during an audition in which he pounced on the startled production assistant who was reading opposite him. "He grabbed him by the head," Cameron said, "and he pretty much got the job right there."

Lang said the "Avatar" set was "quite electric" with the sense that the movie would become a watershed moment in Hollywood history. The actor said working with Cameron was demanding and invigorating.

"Jim is extremely focused and quite ferocious in pursuit of what we're doing. He's also a hell of a lot of fun to work with and has a good humor about him. He demands a tremendous amount not by saying, 'This is what I demand of you' but by his own intensity and preparation. With Jim Cameron, you are challenged and supported, and that's a pretty great combination."

The opening weekend of "Avatar" put an exclamation point on a strong year for Lang, who played a quirky Army officer in "The Men Who Stare at Goats" and popped up on television in the season finale of "Law & Order: Criminal Intent."

Another highlight was portraying taciturn lawman Charles Winstead in Michael Mann's "Public Enemies."

Lang chuckled when asked whether it was especially memorable to be the man who gunned down "Public Enemies" leading man Johnny Depp, arguably the biggest movie star in the world. "Well, I shot him about 220 times. It was a Michael Mann film after all. After a few dozen times, it loses a bit of the magic."

The New York native's stage resume includes a memorable turn as one of Willie Loman's sons in the 1980s revival of "Death of a Salesman" starring Dustin Hoffman and a 1991 Tony nomination for his work in "The Speed of Darkness." Lang was also the first stage actor to play Lt. Col. Nathan Jessep, the signature character in "A Few Good Men" and, yes, yet another wild-eyed military lion.

Asked why he specializes in the roles of rigid men in harm's way, Lang pondered the question but couldn't come up with an answer that satisfied him. He pointed out, though, that despite the aura of discipline and chain of command, the military men he has played all tended to break the rules—or perhaps write new ones.

"They were mavericks," Lang said. "They didn't tend to do things by the book. They took it to a place of the unexpected and the extreme.

"These are the guys who go outside and that go, as they say, above and beyond, the ones that do what cannot be done. The ones we go back to over and over again—Guadalcanal or the madness of Pickett's charge. These are things that if you took a truly aerial view of, you would gasp and say, 'What were they thinking?' "

'2012' sets box office record in China

HONG KONG (AP)—A second Hollywood movie has shattered the Chinese box office record in a year, as Beijing faces increased pressure to ease its annual quota of 20 foreign blockbusters.

The American disaster film "2012" has made 460 million Chinese yuan ($67.3 million) as of Dec. 23, eclipsing the previous of mark of 450 million yuan set by another Hollywood blockbuster, "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen" earlier this year, Weng Li, spokesman for the state-owned film importer, China Film Group, told The Associated Press in a phone interview from Beijing on Monday.

The new record came just days after the World Trade Organization on Dec. 21 upheld an earlier ruling that China is illegally restricting U.S. music, film and book imports. China only shares revenues with foreign movie studios on 20 imports a year—a restriction that amounts to a quota on foreign blockbusters.

Hollywood's success in China in 2009 may justify to Chinese officials that local movies still need protection—although domestic fare has also enjoyed a strong year.

The Chinese propaganda movie "The Founding of a Republic," made 415 million yuan earlier this year, landing it the No. 3 spot in the all-time box office ranking after "2012" and "Transformers." That star-studded production featuring cameos by Jackie Chan and Jet Li, however, was a politically important film made to mark 60 years of communist rule, with many movie theater operators saturating their screens with showings.

Weng said Monday that he had not read the WTO ruling and had no immediate comment, but he added that foreign imports were going "smoothly," noting that the James Cameron 3-D sci-fi blockbuster "Avatar," is scheduled to hit Chinese screens on Jan. 4. Cameron was China's box office champion for 11 years with "Titanic" until his record of 360 million was broken by "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen" in July.

The strong Chinese results of "2012" and "Transformers" highlights the huge potential of the mainland box office. In 2008, Chinese box office revenues surged 30.5 percent to 4.3 billion Chinese yuan ($629 million).

"2012" was also helped by a plot that was politically correct for patriotic Chinese audiences. As the Earth's core overheats, world leaders build an ark in the mountains of central China to house people and animals that can repopulate the planet. Scenes from the nearly 3-hour movie feature a U.S. military officer saying that only the Chinese could build an ark of such a scale so quickly.

Since opening in China on Nov. 13, the Roland Emmerich movie has been shown on as many as 1,900 screens and is currently still showing on about 300, according to Li Chow, Sony Pictures Releasing International's general manager for China. China had 4,100 screens as of the end of 2008.

Marilyn Manson, former bandmate settle lawsuit

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A contentious lawsuit between Marilyn Manson and former bandmate Stephen Bier has been settled without the multimillion judgment the keyboardist initially sought, court records show.

An agreement calls for attorneys representing former Bier to be paid $380,000. Manson's insurance company will pay $175,000 while the rest will be paid by Bier's former business managers, Manson's attorney Howard King said.

Manson

Bier sued the shock rocker for $20 million in 2007, claiming the singer kept money from him and spent it to furnish a lavish lifestyle buying Nazi memorabilia, an engagement ring and other exotic goods.

Manson denied Bier's claims and said Bier didn't properly perform his duties as a band member.

Bier, who went by the stage name Madonna Wayne Gacy, was among the original members of Manson's band when it was known as Marilyn Manson and The Spooky Kids.

The case had been scheduled to go to trial this month after frequent delays and months of fighting between the two sides over depositions, documents and scheduling.

King declared victory, saying Manson will not have to pay any money directly. He said the case should have never been filed.

A dispute over how the $380,000 settlement should be divided has kept the case from being formally dismissed. A law firm that Bier also sued is seeking more than $70,000 from the settlement for legal fees it was awarded after having portions of the case dismissed and the ruling upheld on appeal.

Bier's attorney, Keith A. Fink, said the settlement also calls for some of his client's equipment to be returned.

Manson recently finished a European tour.

Nelly offers reward in burglary of his home

ST. LOUIS (AP)—The rapper Nelly is offering a $10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the man who broke into his suburban St. Louis home earlier this month.

CrimeStoppers announced the reward on Monday.

Someone forced his way through a locked window at Nelly's Wildwood home in the early hours of Dec. 11 and got away with a duffel bag full of items that included electronics and other goods.

Nelly, whose real name is Cornell Haynes Jr., was not home at the time. Police say one of three occupants saw and confronted the intruder, a male in his 20s or 30s.

No one was injured.

Roman Polanski thanks supporters for solidarity

PARIS (AP)—Filmmaker Roman Polanski says letters from supporters that he received in a Swiss prison and while under house arrest at his Alpine chalet have been "full of comfort and reason to hope."

Polanski's first public comments since his Sept. 26 arrest at Zurich airport came in a letter transmitted to French philosopher and friend Bernard-Henri Levy, who put them online Sunday at the director's request.

Polanski, 76, is waiting to learn whether he'll be extradited to the U.S. where he is wanted in Los Angeles for sentencing for having sex in 1977 with a 13-year-old girl.

"I have been overwhelmed by the number of messages of support and sympathy I have received in Winterthur prison, and that I continue to receive here, in my chalet in Gstaad, where I am spending the holidays with my wife and my children," the letter reads.

Polanski says he has received messages from neighbors and people around the world.

"I would like every one of them to know how heartening it is, when one is locked up in a cell, to hear this murmur of human voices and of solidarity in the morning mail. In the darkest moments, each of their notes has been a source of comfort and hope," he writes.

Polanski is finishing the edit of his latest movie, "Ghost," from his chalet, Levy has said.

Polanski was transferred Dec. 4 to house arrest from a Swiss jail after more than 60 days of detention. He must wear an electronic monitoring bracelet around his ankle to guard against his leaving the grounds of the chalet, but he is able to receive guests, work on his films, make telephone calls and send e-mails.

Singer Boyle brings act to Japan

AP

British singer Susan Boyle poses for photographers upon arriving at Narita International Airport in Narita, east of Tokyo, Japan, Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2009.

NARITA, Japan (AP)—Scottish singing sensation Susan Boyle has brought her act to Japan.

The 48-year-old church volunteer who rocketed to fame with her surprising performance on "Britain's Got Talent" arrived at Tokyo's international airport on Tuesday to prepare for a guest appearance on Japan's premier vocal variety show, which will be aired live on New Year's Eve by Japan's public broadcaster, NHK.

Boyle smiled broadly as she greeted a mob of photographers at the airport, but declined a request for an impromptu song, saying her fans would have to wait for the NHK show.

She is scheduled to sing her trademark "I Dreamed a Dream" from Les Miserables.

The NHK program, now in its 60th year, showcases the most popular singers of the year. Most of its guests are Japanese.

Boyle was runner-up in the British talent show, but her performance became a hit on YouTube and made her one of the biggest international celebrities of the year, with more than 120 million views.

Tyra Banks says she's ending her talk show

NEW YORK (AP)—Tyra Banks is pulling the plug on her talk show.

The former model says the syndicated "The Tyra Show" will end after its fifth season. Banks says she's sticking with the reality show "America's Next Top Model" and is forming a new production studio with plans to make movies. She also promised new digital projects, but wouldn't give details.

In a statement on her Web site, Banks also paid tribute to talk-show queen Oprah Winfrey, who's ending her talk show in 2011.

This June 28, 2009 file photo shows Tyra Banks arriving at the 9th Annual BET Awards in Los Angeles.

AP

A new Van Morrison is born: Singer has a baby boy

This Monday, Oct. 26, 2009 picture shows recording artist Van Morrison in New York.

AP

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A new Van Morrison has been born.

The 64-year-old Irish singer says on his Web site that he and his wife, GiGi, welcomed their son George Ivan Morrison III on Monday.

The couple says that "Little Van" is "the spitting image of his daddy." The baby is a dual citizen of the United States and Britain.

No other information was available. Morrison's publicist, Phil Lobel, says the exact time and location of the birth is being kept private.

Romance is cooled by torch woman carries for 'friend'

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DEAR ABBY: I am 80, and "Doreen" is 72. When we started dating seven years ago, I "simply wanted to be her friend." Now the tables have turned, and she just wants to be MY friend.

Doreen has a male friend in Florida with whom she communicates through letters and phone calls. Although she tells me she loves me, she also says that if this "friend" comes back and asks her out, she wants to be free to date him.

I told her that most 72-year-olds would be happy to have one man to date, but if she plans on dating someone else, I should be free to do the same. Her last remark was for me to "be gentle with her." We are affectionate, loving friends, and I care about her a great deal.

Your observations, please.

EDDIE IN MAINE

DEAR EDDIE: Your statement that if Doreen plans to date someone else, you should be free to do the same seems logical to me. Continue to have an affectionate, loving friendship with her—and by all means "be gentle"—but keep your options open and date others in the knowledge that if her snowbird flies home, she'll be billing and cooing with him, and you'll be flying solo.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I have a big problem—my father-in-law, "Hal." He has lived with us more than eight years and has never contributed anything toward his keep. I asked him once to pay some rent, but he refused. This not only caused a rift between my wife and me, but her two siblings—who are well off—said Hal was "living on the poverty line," so we should keep him for nothing.

I wouldn't mind so much, but my wife has to clean up after him, do his laundry and take him to his medical appointments. More than that, having Hal underfoot all the time has completely destroyed our privacy.

Hal spends most of his pension buying presents for his other children who never even come to see him. All we get from him are complaints.

What do you suggest?

RESENTFUL IN IDAHO

DEAR RESENTFUL: Enough is enough. You and your wife are long overdue for a meeting with her siblings to discuss this problem. They should have started chipping in to pay for their father's care eight years ago and also seen to it that you have some respite. Unless and until this is brought out into the open, nothing will change.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My wife, "Audrey," was molested by her stepgrandfather when she was a little girl. She told her mother about it, but because of her age she wasn't taken seriously.

Audrey and I are now talking about starting a family. Abby, I am uncomfortable about bringing children into this family unless everyone understands the reason I will not allow this man to touch our children. The problem is, the information will be devastating to Audrey's grandmother. A child's innocence is worth whatever hard feelings I might create, but how do we handle this without destroying a family?

TAKING CARE OF MY OWN IN HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

DEAR TAKING CARE: Was your wife the only child in the family her step-grandfather had access to? Will the baby you're planning be the first in the family—or has this man had unsupervised contact with others? Keep in mind that if he would molest Audrey, he may also have done it to others—neighbors, etc.

Not only should the family be informed about what happened by you and Audrey now that she is "old enough to be believed," but also ask if anyone else may have been victimized because other children may have been afraid to speak up.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $12 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in price.)

Pastimes

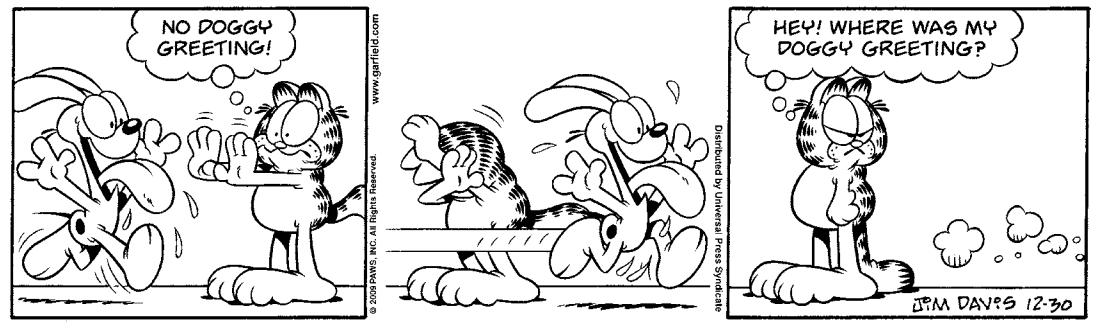
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

NEW HAT, DAD?
YEP.
I LIKE IT.
THANK YOU. SO DO I.
© 1989 Universal Press Syndicate
AAUGH! YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE FOR WORK, DAD!
WATTERSON 12-30

Garfield®

By Jim Davis


NO DOGGY GREETING!
www.garfield.com
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Distributed by Universal Press Syndicate
HEY! WHERE WAS MY DOGGY GREETING?
JIM DAVIS 12-30

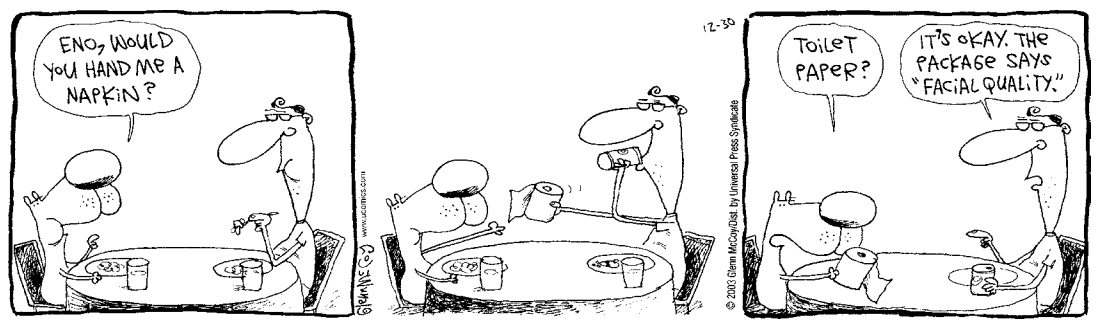
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

THEY SAY MOST NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS DON'T LAST THROUGH JANUARY.
THAT'S KIND OF A SAD REFLECTION ON OUR SOCIETY.
12-30
© 2009 Universal Uclick
WELL, I HAVE A FOOLPROOF PLAN TO OVERCOME THIS.
FOOLPROOF, EH?
TAKE A MEMO, SON. "I, ADAM NEWMAN, DO HEREBY SWEAR NOT TO START MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS UNTIL FEBRUARY 1ST."
www.gocomics.com

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


ENO, WOULD YOU HAND ME A NAPKIN?
www.ucomics.com
12-30
TOILET PAPER?
IT'S OKAY. THE PACKAGE SAYS "FACIAL QUALITY."
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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

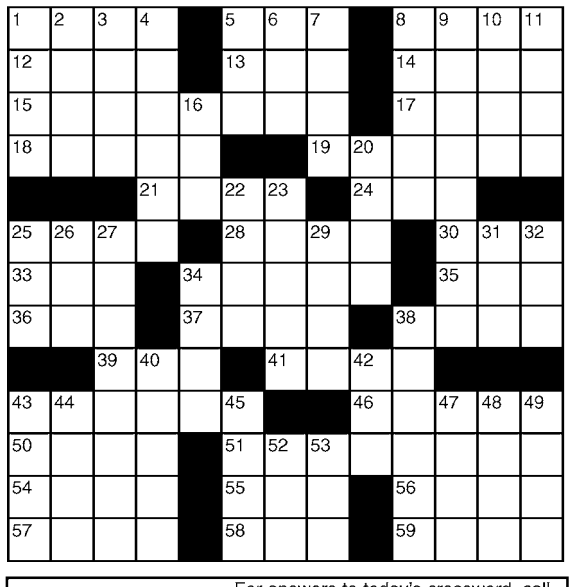
ACROSS
1 Culture medium
5 Third degree?
8 Gunk
12 Lyricist's inspiration
13 Baby shad?
14 Golf target
15 Thriving location
17 Top-notch
18 Breathlessness?
19 Jefferson or Paine
21 Uninteresting
24 Doctrine
25 Indolent
28 Source
30 Nay canceler
33 Id counterpart
34 Appears ominously
35 Heavy weight
36 "Zip-a-Dee- —-Dah"
37 Hathaway or Heche
38 Vendetta
39 "— Doubtfire"
41 MIT grad, often
43 Courteous
46 Relinquish
50 Hearty quaffs
51 "2012" subject
54 Flirtatious gesture
55 Wander
56 Toy with a tail
57 Inquisitive
58 — out a living
59 Progeny

DOWN
1 Actress Jessica
2 Semi-sticky stuff
3 Bard's river
4 Cure
5 Expert
6 "In what way?"
7 Fender bender
8 Total disorder
9 Felix, to Oscar
10 Radius neighbor
11 Near-failing grades
16 Pitch
20 Smacks
22 "East of Eden" twin
23 "You Light Up My Life" singer Debby
25 Started
26 Past
27 Photog's gizmo
29 Portent
31 Thee
32 Finish
34 Final
38 Pats down
40 Dangerous
42 P.E. venue
43 King protector?
44 Hodge-podge
45 Advantage
47 Falco or McClurg
48 Tardy
49 Turned red?
52 Acorn provider
53 Praise in verse

Solution time: 21 mins.

C	U	F	F	■	C	O	T	■	T	R	A	P	
A	S	I	A	■	A	S	H	■	R	U	N	E	
L	A	R	K	S	P	U	R	■	U	N	T	O	
■	■	■	E	A	T	■	O	R	I	G	I	N	
A	P	A	R	T	■	T	W	A	S	■	■	■	
C	O	P	Y	■	B	O	O	K	M	A	R	K	
I	L	E	■	A	R	G	U	E	■	G	I	N	
D	A	R	K	M	E	A	T	■	P	O	C	O	
■	■	■	L	E	A	S	■	O	U	G	H	T	
A	M	O	U	N	T	■	I	L	L	■	■	■	
T	A	R	T	■	H	Y	D	E	P	A	R	K	
O	Y	E	Z	■	E	E	L	■	I	D	E	A	
P	O	S	Y	■	R	A	Y	■	T	O	B	Y	

Yesterday's answer 12-30



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: LeBron James, 25; Laila Ali, 32; Tiger Woods, 34; Matt Lauer, 52

Happy Birthday: You have what it takes to start something and see it through to the end. Stabilize your life by making the most of what you've got to offer. A chance to separate from the crowd will allow you to interest someone looking for a unique, open-minded partner. You have to be strong and see your plans through to the end. Your numbers are 5, 13, 19, 23, 26, 33, 40

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): You cannot leave anything undone. Answer questions being asked and you will discover exactly what you must do to turn around a stressful situation. A strict budget, along with lowering your overhead will bring good results. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Someone from your past will offer a different opinion that makes sense to you and complements your own plans. Clear your head of any temptation and follow the road that leads to stability and a better future. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): You won't be too clear about your past, present or future but you will have some interesting ideas to run by someone in the know and who may be able to help you. This is the time to lower debt, not take on more. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Visiting someone you don't see often will help to clear up some uncertainty about your future. A partnership will open up doors that have been closed in the past, allowing you some financial and geographical maneuverability. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Don't sit back waiting for things to come to you. You can start anew if you line up the people you need to pursue your goals. Your contributions in the past will put you in a stellar position. A change of location will lead to an important discovery. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Network all you can and offer your opinions, suggestions and friendship in return for the same. The more outlets you have and connections you make, the easier it will be to obtain the goals you have set for the new year. ✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): A good idea will develop with someone who has an unusual way of looking at situations. Socialize with people you don't get to see often. It's never too late to reunite with someone who inspires you. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Lower your overhead so you can diminish the stress you've been experiencing and get back to what you enjoy doing most. A move can help you reconnect with some of your talents, allowing you greater options in the new year. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Don't lose sight of your goals but don't neglect anyone who may be able to help you in the future. You have to walk a fine line, allowing others freedom so you can maintain your own. Money or a deal is heading your way. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Don't back down even if someone begs for your support or financial assistance. Stick to your own game plan if you want to enter the new year feeling good about your future and confident you can finish whatever you start. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Spend time with friends or colleagues. You will make the most headway by sharing your views and taking part as a team player. An interesting surprise will help you make a decision you've been laboring over. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Don't let envy be your downfall. Making assumptions based on what others tell you is a waste of time. Do your best and show everyone that you measure up to whatever challenge or competition you face. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You have integrity, stamina and courage. You are diplomatic, strong-willed and charismatic. You don't back down or give in.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

					8	6		
				1			4	
				9			1	3
	7	1			2	5		
3			4	6	5		2	
4							6	
	2						8	
		9	1	8	3	2		
			5		9			

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/30

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

3	8	9	5	4	7	1	2	6
4	5	6	2	8	1	3	9	7
2	7	1	6	9	3	8	4	5
7	9	4	8	5	2	6	1	3
8	6	3	7	1	4	2	5	9
1	2	5	3	6	9	7	8	4
5	3	8	9	2	6	4	7	1
6	4	2	1	7	5	9	3	8
9	1	7	4	3	8	5	6	2

Difficulty Level ★★ 12/29

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

QUARKS **Solution: 9 letters**

S	R	E	T	T	A	M	E	G	R	A	H	C	N	N
U	G	E	N	E	R	A	T	I	O	N	O	O	O	C
B	Y	N	L	A	U	T	R	I	V	M	R	I	Y	I
S	L	R	O	U	G	H	L	Y	B	T	T	I	N	N
T	A	L	O	I	C	E	L	I	A	C	N	P	O	T
R	U	E	A	E	T	M	N	V	A	T	O	A	I	E
U	Q	D	F	T	H	A	E	E	E	T	N	R	T	R
C	E	U	S	O	T	T	R	R	R	O	R	A	A	C
T	V	T	N	I	R	I	A	U	T	I	R	L	V	H
U	I	I	O	O	Ⓐ	C	C	P	G	E	C	L	R	A
R	T	N	Y	D	Ⓣ	A	E	E	L	I	S	E	E	N
E	A	G	R	E	Ⓐ	L	H	E	N	S	F	L	S	G
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Yesterday's Answer: Uniqueness

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pro se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In Re The Matter Of The Petition To Appoint General Guardianship For:	FCD GU CIVIL ACTION NO. 09-0693
ANGEL JAMAL BISANEN, Minor Child	NOTICE OF HEARING
By: Antonio C. Angui & Francisca T. Angui, Petitioners	

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on January 11, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. in courtroom 205 A, before Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo.

Dated this 11th day of December, 2009.

BERNADITA SABLAN
Clerk of Court

/s/Deputy Clerk of Court

Mary Ann Ramangmou Samad
P.O. Box 7439 SVRB
Saipan, MP 96950
Telephone No.: 256-7262

pro se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Change of Name of	FCD CN Civil Action No. 09-0678
MARY ANN RAMANGMOU SAMAD, Petitioner.	NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on January 12, 2010, at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom 205A, before Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo.

Dated this 30th day of November, 2009.

/s/ Bernadita Sablan
Clerk of Court

Vacancy Announcement
Program Officer
Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities

The Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities (Council) is soliciting applications for the position of Program Officer. The Program Officer is responsible for developing and implementing a variety of humanities programs and events and coordinating the Council's Community Grants program under the supervision of the Council's executive director and board of directors. A detailed description of the Program Officer's duties may be obtained from the Council's office in Springs Plaza, Gualo Rai or from the Council's website at www.nmihumanities.org.

Applicants for this position must possess: (1). strong analytic, writing and communication skills; (2). knowledge of grants writing and grants administration; (3). the ability to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds; (4). a working knowledge of NMI history and of current political, social and economic issues confronting the local community; (5). basic computer skills including knowledge of MS Excel, Word and PowerPoint; and (6). the ability to articulate the Council's mission to a wide range of audiences.

Applicants must have a bachelor's degree (B.A. or B.S.) in a humanities discipline from an accredited postsecondary institution. The salary range is from $35,000 to $40,000 depending on qualifications and experience. Benefits are set forth in the NMICH Personnel Policy Manual.

Interested individuals are invited to send a letter of interest, a detailed résumé and the names and addresses of three references to Scott Russell, Executive Director, Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities, Box 506407, Saipan, MP 96950. Applications must be received by Council staff on or before 4:00 p.m. on Friday, 22 January 2010. Those wishing more information about this position may contact Council staff at 235-4785.

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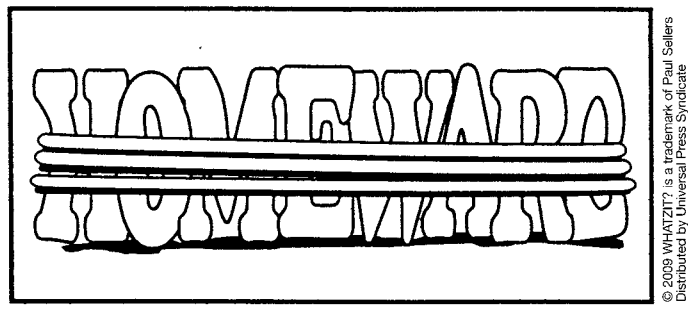

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Find today's solution in this section

DRUNK DRIVING *Over the limit. Under arrest.*

Ellis, Warriors hold off Celtics, 103-99

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP)—Monta Ellis scored 37 points and converted two free throws with 2.3 seconds left, and the Golden State Warriors rallied from an early 18-point deficit to hand the Boston Celtics just their second two-game losing streak this season with a 103-99 victory Monday night.

Anthony Randolph added 18 points and nine rebounds and scored six straight during an 8-2 run late in the third quarter to put the Warriors ahead. C.J. Watson had six of his career-high seven steals in the second quarter, matching the Warriors' record for a quarter, and also contributed 11 points and seven assists.

Rajon Rondo had 30 points and 15 assists to lead Boston, which had its nine-game road winning streak snapped in a 92-90 loss to the Clippers in Los Angeles on Sunday night. The Celtics couldn't convert on a final chance in the waning seconds. They haven't won in won in the Bay Area since Dec. 29, 2003.

Boston got the ball back with 43 seconds left after Eddie House tied up Anthony Morrow but Ray Allen missed a quick 3-pointer. Allen finished with 24 points and five rebounds and had 18 points on his first 11 shots. Kevin Garnett added 16 points and nine boards for Boston, which lost consecutive games for the first time since Nov. 13-14.

Ellis shot 15 of 26 for the Warriors, who won back-to-back games for just the second time this season. They ended a seven-game losing streak with a 132-127 home win over Phoenix on Saturday.

Ellis scored five straight points late in the third quarter, including a 3-pointer with 29.3 seconds left. Then Rondo knocked down a 3 at the buzzer on the other end to keep Boston within four, 80-76, heading into the final period. House started the fourth with a 3 then hit another long jumper the next time down.

Watson's six steals in the third period equaled Baron Davis' feat on Jan. 16, 2008, at Indiana. It's the most by anybody in the NBA in a quarter since Bonzi Wells playing for the Hornets on March 22, 2008.

Boston's skid here is its longest on the road against any opponent. The Warriors have won 13 of the last 16 at home in the series overall.

Celtics coach Doc Rivers called Oracle Arena a tough place to play and win—especially coaching against Don Nelson's teams.

"You just expect everything," Rivers said. "With them, you don't know what kind of crazy lineups they're going to have out there."

Starting Golden State center Andris Biedrins returned after missing a total of 25 games, giving the Warriors a more conventional lineup with Randolph at power forward. Biedrins had been sidelined since Nov. 8 with inflammation in his right groin where it attaches to the abdomen.

He received a roaring ovation when announced before the game but was ineffective, finishing with no points and four rebounds in 13 minutes.

Boston played without injured star Paul Pierce for the third straight game. He had fluid drained from his right knee last Wednesday and was expected to miss two weeks. He could be ready when the team returns home from its six-day, four-game to host Toronto on Saturday.

The Celtics shot 62.5 percent (15 of 24) in the first quarter but couldn't hold a big lead.

AP

Golden State Warriors' Monta Ellis (8) celebrates with teammates Corey Maggette, right, and Anthony Morrow (22) after defeating the Boston Celtics 103-99 at the end of an NBA basketball game Monday, Dec. 28, 2009, in Oakland, Calif.

Suns 118, Lakers 103

At Phoenix, Amare Stoudemire scored 26 points and Jared Dudley matched his career best with 19 as the Phoenix Suns sent the Los Angeles Lakers to their second loss in three games with a surprising rout.

Kobe Bryant scored 34 for the Lakers but sat out the final eight minutes when the game was deemed out of reach by coach Phil Jackson.

Steve Nash had 16 points and 13 assists and the Suns' reserves outscored their Los Angeles counterparts 52-31.

Phoenix led by as many as 12 in the second quarter, 19 in the third and 22 in the fourth to improve to 12-2 at home.

Thunder 105, Nets 89

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Kevin Durant matched his season high with 40 points as Oklahoma City defeated New Jersey, sending the Nets to their 10th straight loss and their second double-digit losing streak of the season.

Former Net Nenad Krstic added 19 points and Russell Westbrook had 16 points and 10 assists as the Thunder won a season-high third straight game. Reserve Nick Collison added 11 points and 10 rebounds. Oklahoma City held the Nets to 17 points in the final 17 minutes.

Yi Jianlian matched his career high with 29 points to lead New Jersey, which set an NBA record with 18 straight losses to start the season. Courtney Lee chipped in with 17, Trenton Hassell had 14 and Devin Harris had 11 and 11 assists.

Bobcats 94, Bucks 84

At Charlotte, North Carolina, Gerald Wallace had 21 points and 14 rebounds as Charlotte beat Milwaukee in a miserable performance for the Bucks that prompted coach Scott Skiles to bench Michael Redd and Andrew Bogut.

Flip Murray added 16 points for the Bobcats in a one-sided matchup of teams that figure to contend for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

The Bobcats built a 22-point halftime lead and Skiles didn't play Bogut or Redd in the second half after they combined to shoot 1 for 10.

Brandon Jennings had 24 points for the Bucks, who shot 38 percent and committed 17 turnovers.

Grizzlies 116, Wizards 111, OT

At Memphis, Tennessee, O.J. Mayo scored 28 points and Zach Randolph had six of his 23 points in overtime as Memphis beat Washington.

Marc Gasol finished with 20, and his two free throws with 9.5 seconds left extended the Memphis lead to 115-111.

Randolph made two free throws with 0.3 seconds left, sending the game to overtime tied at 102.

Mike Conley scored 22 for Memphis, which has won four straight at home. Randolph had 19 rebounds.

Gilbert Arenas led the Wizards with 30 points, connecting on 5 of 11 from 3-point range.

76ers 104, Blazers 93

At Portland, Oregon, Elton Brand had a season-high 25 points and nine rebounds in a reserve role, leading Philadelphia over the Trail Blazers.

Brand, a former All Star, made 9 of 20 shots in 30 minutes to help Philadelphia (8-22) rally from a 10-point second half deficit.

Allen Iverson, who missed the past four games with a knee injury, returned to the lineup as a starter and scored 19 points.

Brandon Roy led Portland (20-13) with 24 points, while LaMarcus Aldridge had 17 points and 12 rebounds.

Kings 106, Nuggets 101

At Sacramento, California, Andres Nocioni made four 3-pointers and scored a season-high 21 points to help Sacramento beat Denver.

Omri Casspi made a 3-pointer from the corner to put the Kings ahead for good at 97-96. Following a missed shot by Carmelo Anthony, Beno Udrih converted on a fastbreak for a three-point play to give Sacramento a 100-96 lead with 1:41 remaining.

Udrih scored 17 points and had seven assists and Donte Greene also had 17 points for the Kings.

Anthony scored 35 points and Nene had 25 points for the Nuggets, who lost their third straight and fifth in six games.

NBA BRIEFS

Jackson 'hopeful' Artest will be back by Tuesday for Warriors

PHOENIX (AP)—Lakers coach Phil Jackson says he is "hopeful" Ron Artest will rejoin the team in Los Angeles for Tuesday's game against Golden State. Speaking before the Lakers played the Phoenix Suns Monday night, Jackson said Artest still was experiencing some dizziness. Artest sustained a concussion and injured his left elbow in a fall at his home on Christmas Day. The team said Artest tripped over a box and fell down stairs. He did not travel with the Lakers on their two-game trip to Sacramento and Phoenix. The 6-foot-7 forward is averaging 12.1 points and 4.8 rebounds in his first season with the Lakers after signing as a free agent. Jackson said his information on Artest's condition came through the team trainer.

Knicks' Robinson fined $25K for agent's remarks

NEW YORK (AP)—Benched New York Knicks guard Nate Robinson was fined $25,000 by the NBA on Monday after his agent made a trade request. Robinson has not played in the Knicks' last 12 games. A two-time winner of the All-Star slam dunk contest, he has played in only 12 games this season and is averaging 11 points. Agent Aaron Goodwin recently told reporters he'd asked the Knicks to move Robinson to another team. NBA players are not allowed to publicly make trade demands, and Robinson was fined for statements detrimental to the league. Goodwin said the benching was personal, not basketball related. A day after Goodwin's comments on Dec. 19, Knicks president Donnie Walsh said he would probably begin talks with the agent about a deal. Robinson averaged a career-high 17.2 points last season as the Knicks' sixth man. He was a restricted free agent in the offseason and re-signed with a one-year contract.

Giants reach agreement with Mark DeRosa

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—The San Francisco Giants hope Mark DeRosa can provide the power in the middle of the lineup they've been seeking this winter.

The Giants made their first big splash of the offseason Monday, reaching an agreement with the free-agent infielder on a two-year contract. Giants spokesman Jim Moorehead said the 12-year veteran was in San Francisco and passed a physical Monday. The team planned to formally announce his deal Tuesday.

One of general manager Brian Sabean's top priorities this offseason was upgrading the Giants' offense—and acquiring DeRosa is a significant step in that direction.

San Francisco also is working to finalize a contract to bring back infielder Juan Uribe.

DeRosa, who turns 35 in February, has been on the Giants' radar for a while. He can play on either corner in the infield or outfield, giving San Francisco manager Bruce Bochy greater flexibility with his lineup. He likely will play third, moving slugger Pablo Sandoval to first and giving the Giants more power and offensive punch at that position.

DeRosa underwent left wrist surgery after the 2009 season, when he batted .250 with a career-best 23 homers to go along with 78 RBIs for Cleveland and St. Louis. He was traded from the Indians to the Cardinals on June 27 but was in the St. Louis lineup for three games before hurting his wrist against San Francisco. He spent a stint on the disabled list for an injury that was later diagnosed as a partially torn tendon sheath.

DeRosa, who struggled offensively with the wrist injury, led the Cardinals with five hits (5 for 13) when they were swept by the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL division series.

The Cardinals had hoped to re-sign DeRosa, who declined their salary arbitration offer. He is a career .275 hitter with Atlanta, Texas, the Chicago Cubs, Cleveland and St. Louis.

The 30-year-old Uribe began the 2009 campaign as a backup but wound up playing in 122 games at third, shortstop and second in his first season with San Francisco. He batted .289 with 16 homers and 55 RBIs.

The Giants were in the NL wild-card chase well into September but missed the postseason for the sixth straight year. At 88-74, they won 16 more games than in 2008. Sabean has been committed to boosting the offense for a team that boasts one of the top pitching staffs in baseball, led by two-time reigning NL Cy Young Award winner Tim Lincecum.

San Francisco already brought back second baseman Freddy Sanchez, who was acquired in a trade with the Pirates on July 29 but was limited to 25 games because of injuries. The three-time All-Star signed a $12 million, two-year contract extension in late October.

Cutler leads Bears over Vikings, 36-30 in OT

CHICAGO (AP)—Brett Favre cranked up and made one more impossible throw, zinging a touchdown pass in the fading seconds. Too bad for the Minnesota Vikings, that merely put them into overtime.

The Vikings lost again Monday night, beaten by the Chicago Bears 36-30 when Jay Cutler tossed a 39-yard strike to Devin Aromashodu. Minnesota fell for the third time in four games, and the defeat gave the New Orleans Saints homefield advantage throughout the NFC playoffs.

"I know we're fortunate to be in the playoffs but we have to play better than we did the last few weeks or we'll be home fairly quickly," Favre said. "I'm just being honest as I can be."

Playing for the first time since the dustup between the star quarterback and coach Brad Childress became public, the Vikings' late rally wasn't enough.

After Favre's stunning, fourth-down pass to Sidney Rice with 16 seconds left in regulation, Cutler threw the game-winner with just over 9 minutes left in overtime to prevent the Vikings (11-4) from locking up a first-round playoff bye.

Nick Roach recovered a fumble by Adrian Peterson following a catch, setting up Cutler's fourth touchdown pass of the game.

Favre's pass to a leaping Rice capped a 68-yard touchdown drive and tied the game at 30.

Chicago's Robbie Gould, who kicked three field goals in the first half, had a chance to win it on the first possession of the overtime but missed a 45-yard field goal wide right.

The Bears (6-9) took advantage a few minutes later, though, when Hunter Hillenmeyer knocked the ball away from Peterson and Roach recovered. Cutler found an open Aromashodu, who had beaten Antoine Winfield, and the Bears won for just the third time in 11 games.

"It's good for the team, it's good for the morale of going out there and putting up points and answering the bell, especially in the fourth quarter and overtime when you have to do it," Cutler said.

Favre has never led a team to a win after trailing by 17 or more points, falling to 0-43 in such situations. The Bears were up 23-6 in the third quarter and the Vikings were able to tie it twice.

AP

Chicago Bears wide receiver Devin Aromashodu makes a touchdown catch in overtime to give the Bears a 36-30 win over the Minnesota Vikings in an NFL football game in Chicago, Monday, Dec. 28, 2009.

Minnesota can lock up a first-round bye with a win next week and loss or tie by Philadelphia or with a tie and an Eagles loss. But after running away with the NFC North, the Vikings didn't expect to be in this situation.

They started 10-1 behind a resurgent Favre, but have tailed off since. Favre had a good game after three mediocre performances, completing 26 of 40 passes for 321 yards and two touchdowns. Peterson ran for 94 yards and two scores, but the Vikings simply couldn't pull this one out.

Cutler looked more like the player the Bears thought they were getting in a trade with Denver than the one who's been racking up interceptions at an alarming rate. He was 20 of 35 for 273 yards, although he did throw his league-leading 26th interception.

"It's fun," Cutler said of outdueling Favre. "He got me in Denver. I got him when he was in New York. ... It was a good game."

Aromashodu had seven catches for 150 yards, and Danieal Manning set up two touchdowns with kickoff returns of 57 and 59 yards.

The Bears led 16-0 at halftime and 23-6 midway through the third before Minnesota rallied. The Vikings tied it at 23 on Peterson's 1-yard run with 5:49 left, then Manning ran the kickoff back 59 yards before tripping at the 21. Two plays later, Cutler hit Earl Bennett with a 20-yard touchdown to give the Bears a 30-23 lead with 4:55 remaining, and the Bears appeared to be in good shape.

Favre and Rice had other ideas, though, tying it with that spectacular catch at the end of regulation. Hillenmeyer finally set up the winning touchdown, knocking the ball away from Peterson after he caught a short flare.

This looked like a primetime-worthy matchup when the schedule came out, and it lived up to that billing even though the script didn't play out as expected.

Bears coach Lovie Smith is feeling the heat, and general manager Jerry Angelo added a few logs before last week's loss at Baltimore, when he passed on offering a vote of confidence while saying a roster overhaul wasn't necessary.

Then again, after three straight misses, it's not clear if Angelo is on solid footing.

"I think the game made a statement about our football team and where we are and what we can be in the future, no more than that," Smith said. "As a football coach your job is at stake every day you go to work. ... It's like that with everyone. I realize where I am and where we are. It's been a disappointing season and I'm the head football coach."

Suddenly, the Vikings are looking shaky, too.

That sideline confrontation during last week's loss to Carolina sparked reports that Favre and Childress had clashed over play-calling, although they insisted their relationship was fine.

Childress said he simply wanted to protect a quarterback under siege by the Panthers. Favre indicated it was performance-based.

Either way, the idea of pulling the league's career passing leader raised more than a few eyebrows even if he hadn't been playing the way he did earlier.

Colts face great debate over pulling starters

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Colts coach Jim Caldwell will not second-guess the decision to rest his starters Sunday.

He'll let everybody else do it for him.

One day after Indianapolis pulled the plug on its perfect season by sitting Peyton Manning and others with 5:36 left in the third quarter of a 15-10 game, the great debate raged in Indianapolis.

NFL purists expressed disappointment that the Colts sidestepped their shot at perfection. Other analysts suggested the Colts had an obligation to play it straight, and hometown fans expressed their anger with strong critiques on local radio shows.

None of it fazed Caldwell.

"I'm one of those guys, it's probably my greatest strength and my greatest weakness, I can focus in, I can narrow my scope, and once you make a decision you have to live with it," he said. "Certainly you weigh all the options before. You take a look at all the things that could occur, but once that decision is done you just keep moving."

Indy fans aren't ready to move on just yet.

After celebrating record after record during an unprecedented 23-game winning streak and feeling like they had a personal stake in the pursuit of perfection, they showered Lucas Oil Stadium with boos over the final 20 minutes Sunday. Pro Bowl receiver Reggie Wayne joked to a local television station that Indy might be the first 14-1 team to get booed at home.

In time, fans will likely calm down, and if the Colts win the Super Bowl, all will be forgiven.

"Ultimately, what matters the most is what happens in the postseason," Denver coach Josh McDaniels said. "So, I think their season is going to be determined by what they do once the playoffs start, not what happened yesterday."

The controversy has stoked passions among Indy sports fans and on the national stage unlike anything this community has seen since the firing of Bob Knight in 2000 or The Brawl in Detroit in 2004.

Yes, everybody has an opinion, but the only ones that really matter are voiced in the locker room—and they support Caldwell.

"You get people who think you should have gone for it and people who think we did a disservice to the NFL by not playing our guys," said left tackle Charlie Johnson, who was deactivated for Sunday's game because of a foot injury. "But I think you have to look at the decisions coach Caldwell has made up to this point and trust him."

The decision also could have ramifications on the playoff race.

The Jets now have control, thanks to Sunday's victory, and teams such as Pittsburgh or Houston could end up missing the postseason because the Colts rested key players.

"Obviously I would have loved to have seen them win that game," Houston coach Gary Kubiak said. "But for us it really doesn't matter. We have to worry about taking care of our business. ... They've got to do what they think they got to do. But we've got to worry about ourselves."

Caldwell and team president Bill Polian, the architect of the Colts, insist they did what was best for the team. Their goal, Polian and Caldwell continue to insist, is to win the Super Bowl—not go 16-0. And the best way to accomplish that, they believe, is to be healthy.

So they sat the starters for the final 20 minutes, allowing the Jets to rally for a 29-15 victory. They're likely to sit even longer this weekend in Buffalo.

"The perfect season was never an issue with us," Polian said after the game. "We've said it time and time and time again. It's somebody else's issue, but not ours. That was of no concern. Football logic has to come into play, and that logic is it makes no sense to have guys out there with the potential for injuries."

Fans didn't buy Polian's contention.

Callers to radio shows repeatedly questioned Indy's tack. Some asked for refunds. Others described Polian as "arrogant" and one fan said the team "spit in our face." One talk show host read an e-mail on the air that said the Colts didn't lose Sunday's game, they forfeited it, and many brought up the Colts' previous postseason failures.

In three of the last four years, Indianapolis has not won a playoff game. The other time, the Colts won the Lombardi Trophy.

It's a tricky question.

Oakland defensive lineman Richard Seymour, who played on the perfect Patriots in 2007, and Titans coach Jeff Fisher, who had the last team to lose a game in 2008, believe organizations have to make the decision that is best for them, even though Fisher said he would play his starters if he were 14-0.

So will Caldwell's decision be worth it? Maybe.

"I think everybody really had the sense that if they played their players they would win the next two games. They didn't," Fisher said. "But I think we have to wait and see and then go back and ask yourself that question. Just wait and see what happens in the playoffs."

Rollers C slips past Hopwood Oldies

Rollers C posted the closest victory in Day 2 of the 2009 Annual Holiday Hoops after downing Hopwood Oldies, 31-28, yesterday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Jimmaraley Babauta made a layup and Christian De Vero canned a pair of free throws in the last one minute of the match to save the day for Rollers C.

Hopwood Oldies worked their way back from a 20-29 deficit and cut the lead to as low as two, 29-31, but muffed several baskets in the paint to fell short of stealing the win in their boys' 14-and-under/ girls 18-and-under division game.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Rollers C's Jimmaraley Babauta drives to the basket against a Hopwood Oldies defender during their game in the holiday caging yesterday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

In other results, the Mixed Plate outclassed the G-Stars, 49-42, in their boys'14-and-under/ girls 18-and-under division game. Mixed Plate led at halftime, 22-14, and kept the driver's seat in the second half behind Roxanne Duenas' outside sniping. Duenas drilled four triples in the game and finished with 18 points.

Mixed Plate made it 2-for-2, as it also prevailed over Rollers B, 39-21. Mixed Plate was ahead by 14 at halftime, 26-13, and increased the lead in the second half after limiting Rollers B to only six points.

In another boys' 14-and-under/ girls 18-and-under division game, the defending champion Lil' Sonics cruised to their second win after whipping Hilitai Boyz, 42-26.

Lil' Sonics held Hilitai Boyz to 10 points in the first half en route to a 16-point win.

Rollers A recorded the most lopsided triumph in Day 2, crushing the MHS Lady Dolphins, 82-39.

The first game of the day had Hopwood Girls 1 thumping Lady Hilitais, 51-26, in their girls'14-and-under/boys'11-and-under division match. ***(Roselyn B. Monroyo)***

BACK-TO-BACK

From Page 28

was a close one in the first half before the eventual winners began seizing control of the match in the third period. Hoopaholics trailed at halftime, 34-36, but Josh Sablan, Peter Mendiola, Gus Palacios, and Gyles Ruluked teamed up in the third to grab the lead, 59-50.

Hoopaholics stretched the gap to as much as 12 points before Won Joo Jung sparked a comeback in the fourth period and cut the lead to as low as three points, 77-74, going into the last minute of the game.

Jung tried to move Cholos closer, but he lost the leather on his way to the basket and James Villacrusis answered with a layup to bring the lead to five points, 79-74. A Peter Mendiola jumper and a split free throw from John Sablan sealed the win for Hoopaholics.

Mendiola paced Hoopaholics with 14 points, Sablan chipped in 13, and Ruluked and Palacios added 11 apiece.

Jung led all scorers with his 29 points.

In the second game, Prospects capitalized on a depleted Diamond Fixers, cruising to an easy 92-69 lead.

Prospects led by double digits early, 27-17, as Diamond had only seven players available in the first period. John Artates and Glenn Mercurio showed up in the second period, but Elmer Esdrelon and Bruce Berline left at the end of the first canto for a game at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium. Esdrelon and Berline scored five points each before leaving the match.

With its No. 1 scorer gone and one of its frontliners out, Diamond was lost in the second period. It scored only seven points in the first eight minutes of the second quarter, allowing Prospects to pull away with a 44-24 lead.

Prospects never looked back from thereon and the big lead gave the team the luxury to have its bench players played quality minutes and contributed to the victory.

The win also ended Prospects' two-game losing skid and moved the team up to solo third place with its 3-2 record. The loss dropped Diamond to a tie for fifth place with the Hoopaholics (2-3).

First Game

Hoopaholics 82 – Mendiola 14, Sablan 13, Ruluked 11, Palacios 11, Jo. Villacrusis 8, Teregeyo 6, Mendez 6, Ja. Villacrusis 5, Diaz 5.

Cholos 75 – Jung 29, Itibus 12, Sablan 12, Aranda 11, Coldeen 6, Kapileo 3, Baculod 3.

Scoring by quarters: 19-12, 34-36, 59-50, 82-79.

Second Game

Prospects 91 – Lauron 15, Cadagat 13, Paul 11, Inos 10, Peredo 10, Pagarao 9, Moises 8, Aughenbaugh 5, Johnson 2.

Diamond Fixers 69 – Barrios 19, M. Capalad 13, Wesley 11, Mercurio 5, Esdrelon 5, Berline 5, Hernandez 4, Artates 3.

Scoring by quarters: 27-17, 50-27, 68-51, 92-69.

DOCOMO

From Page 28

one final push to steal the game in the fourth quarter. The host cut the lead to as low as 11 points, 73-62, with less than four minutes left in the game, behind Esdrelon and Mendoza's successive baskets.

Docomo coach Marvin Deocares sued for time to stop IT&E's rally and when the game resumed, Mendoza committed a foul, his fifth and last, ending the host's chances to move closer.

Jun Estolas' running jumper off Syl Teregeyo's screen gave Docomo more breathing space, 75-62, and Estolas and Kae Bernardo went on to score the team's last six points to foil IT&E' bid for a comeback.

Estolas and Bernardo topscored for Docomo, drilling 25 markers apiece. Kelvin Fitial chipped in 11.

Jomary Tumaquip led IT&E with 18 points, while Mendoza added 17. Esdrelon and Berline also finished in double figures, notching 14 and 12 markers, respectively.

Docomo 81 – Estolas 25, Bernardo 25, Fitial 11, Villacrusis 8, C. Alvarez 6, Abuel 4, Teregeyo 2.

IT&E 68 – Tumaquip 18, Mendoza 17, Esdrelon 14, Berline 12, Deleon 2, Manibusan 2, Watanabe 2.

Scoring by quarters: 36-10, 52-26, 69-47, 81-68.

NEVADA

From Page 28

Philippines to see what cutoff date he would agree to on blood testing. Schaefer said there was a possibility the two sides could compromise somewhere between Mayweather's demand for testing up until the weigh-in and the 14 days Pacquiao had blood taken prior to the Hatton fight.

"We were at two days and I assume Pacquiao is at 14 days," Schaefer said. "Let's see if somehow there can be a compromise found that maintains the integrity of the tests. If that can be done in a manner acceptable to Pacquiao, I will take it to Mayweather's team."

The urine tests, which were ordered by commission chairman Pat Lundvall, fall under an out-of-competition testing regulation which went into effect last year and allows state boxing authorities to order boxers to comply. Kizer said about 30 of the tests have been ordered in the last 18 months.

The commission's demand comes a day after Pacquiao promoter Bob Arum said he would not budge off a proposal to do just three blood tests on the two fighters—and none within 30 days of the fight. Arum, who had suggested the NAC decide next month who will prevail in the dispute, said he planned to begin negotiating a fight with Paul Malignaggi if Mayweather's camp didn't agree to the terms.

But Mayweather's manager, Leonard Ellerbe, said Monday there would be no fight on Arum's terms, and charged the promoter with trying to shift the blame for the fight not happening from Pacquiao's side to Mayweather.

"If he's unwilling to do random blood and urine it's a nonstarter," Ellerbe told The Associated Press. "He knows that. If they want to walk away from the richest fight in the history of the sport, that's their decision."

Kizer said the urine tests could play a part in breaking the impasse, though Mayweather's camp has said that blood tests are necessary to find performance-enhancing drugs that may not be detected by urine tests. Mayweather backed off earlier on a demand for the tests to be conducted by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency but has insisted all along that they be done randomly and include blood tests within 30 days before the fight.

Ellerbe said his fighter had already made many concessions to get the fight, including the financial split, the penalty for coming in at more than 147 pounds, and the gloves to be used. He said there would be no further concession to meet Arum's terms.

"There's no way," Ellerbe said. "The ball is in their court. But you have to ask yourself why they aren't willing to make sure both fighters are clean to ensure that the biggest fight ever can take place."

Kizer said he informed both fighters that they must take the urine tests, saying Pacquiao would have to find an accredited agency to do his in the Philippines. The state of Nevada is paying for the tests, which cost about $150.

"We're always hopeful that when we do drug testing it comes back negative," Kizer said. "I don't know if this will help the chances of the fight happening. But with all this talk of drug tests, let's actually do one."

SECHARMIDAL

From Page 28

plate with Sablan notching five runs, one double, four homers, and 10 RBIs. Aldan only scored two runs, one home run and seven RBIs.

Completing the Top 10 in batting—based on seven or more times at bat—are Ramblers' Ben Falig (.800), Chura's Peter Tomokane (.800), 6-Pack's Lucian George (.786), Man Amigos' Julian Camacho (.778), Natibu's B.J. Sablan (.778), Freedom Air's Shane Yamada (.750), Berdax' Ben Taisacan (.750), Hitz's Kyle Kaipat (.714), Blazers' Patrick Blas (.714), Saipal's Gloyd Martin (.714), G-Ballers' Leonardo Salalila (.700), and Man Amigos' John Terlaje (.700).

George is also leading the league in runs scored with nine, while Chura's Mel Sakisat and Santos has earned eight apiece. J.J. Laniyo and Michael Taitano have scored the most doubles so far with three, while Jeffrey Isaac, Eric Palacios, J.D. Dikito, Manny Tenorio, and George are tied with the most triples made with two each. RBI co-leaders are Sablan and Secharmidal with 10 apiece.

Magofna ahead in pitching race

The pitching race has only one leader in 6-Pack's Blas Magofna, who posted a 3.50 ERA. In three games and 14 innings pitched, he allowed seven runs and 22 hits, and posted a 2-0 record.

Freedom Air's Aldebert Lizama Jr. is in second place with a 3.68 ERA, followed by Jack Lancheros' Jack Reyes (4.25), Natibu's Ned Norita (5.53), Fuegu's Juan Iguel (6.72), Hits's Ruben Olkeriil (5.83), San Roque's Manny Tenorio (6.18), Berdax's Tom Magofna (7.00), Blazers' Jess Taitano (7.50), and Island Rebels' Marvin Palacios (7.50).

Jose Santos is ahead in the strikeouts race with seven, while Lizama, Alfred Hocog, and Marvin Palacios have six each. Reyes, Tenorio, and Norita have posted five strikeouts each.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	23	7	.767	—
Toronto	15	17	.469	9
New York	11	19	.367	12
Philadelphia	8	22	.267	15
New Jersey	2	29	.065	21 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	22	8	.733	—
Atlanta	21	8	.724	1/2
Miami	16	12	.571	5
Charlotte	12	17	.414	9 1/2
Washington	10	19	.345	11 1/2

Central Division

Cleveland	24	8	.750	—
Milwaukee	12	17	.414	10 1/2
Chicago	11	17	.393	11
Detroit	11	19	.367	12
Indiana	9	20	.310	13 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	22	9	.710	—
San Antonio	17	11	.607	3 1/2
Houston	18	13	.581	4
Memphis	14	16	.467	7 1/2
New Orleans	13	15	.464	7 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	20	12	.625	—
Portland	20	13	.606	1/2
Utah	17	13	.567	2
Oklahoma City	16	14	.533	3
Minnesota	7	24	.226	12 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	24	6	.800	—
Phoenix	20	12	.625	5
Sacramento	14	16	.467	10
L.A. Clippers	13	17	.433	11
Golden State	9	21	.300	15

Yesterday's Games

Charlotte 94, Milwaukee 84
Oklahoma City 105, New Jersey 89
Memphis 116, Washington 111, OT
Phoenix 118, L.A. Lakers 103
Sacramento 106, Denver 101
Philadelphia 104, Portland 93
Golden State 103, Boston 99

NBA LEADERS

Scoring

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Anthony, DEN	30	311	263	911	30.4
Bryant, LAL	29	322	189	863	29.8
James, CLE	31	310	220	891	28.7
Durant, OKC	29	270	226	805	27.8
Wade, MIA	27	249	205	725	26.9
Nowitzki, DAL	29	271	188	752	25.9
Ellis, GOL	29	288	141	732	25.2
Bosh, TOR	31	250	220	726	23.4
Roy, POR	31	249	165	707	22.8
Arenas, WAS	28	217	140	626	22.4
Johnson, ATL	29	240	97	621	21.4
Gay, MEM	28	220	117	577	20.6
Evans, SAC	28	212	130	569	20.3
Duncan, SAN	25	201	102	504	20.2
Stoudemire, PHX	31	235	153	623	20.1
Williams, UTA	28	204	115	557	19.9
Randolph, MEM	29	234	105	576	19.9
Kaman, LAC	29	238	97	573	19.8
Boozer, UTA	30	235	116	586	19.5
Jennings, MIL	28	199	88	541	19.3

FG Percentage

	FG	FGA	PCT
Perkins, BOS	134	209	.641
Howard, ORL	167	269	.621
Gasol, MEM	162	266	.609
Horford, ATL	170	288	.590
Landry, HOU	178	305	.584
Hilario, DEN	153	267	.573
Millsap, UTA	129	226	.571
Lee, NYK	215	379	.567
O'Neal, MIA	133	237	.561
Garnett, BOS	168	302	.556

Rebounds

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Howard, ORL	30	113	288	401	13.4
Noah, CHI	28	117	231	348	12.4
Wallace, CHA	27	59	261	320	11.9
Camby, LAC	29	86	247	333	11.5
Randolph, MEM	29	137	185	322	11.1
Bosh, TOR	31	102	241	343	11.1
Lee, NYK	29	72	242	314	10.8
Boozer, UTA	30	60	260	320	10.7
Haywood, WAS	28	113	180	293	10.5
Duncan, SAN	25	77	183	260	10.4

Assists

	G	AST	AVG
Nash, PHX	31	347	11.2
Paul, NOR	20	214	10.7
Williams, UTA	28	280	10.0
Rondo, BOS	28	269	9.6
Kidd, DAL	30	275	9.2
James, CLE	31	244	7.9
B. Davis, LAC	29	219	7.6
Arenas, WAS	28	194	6.9
Westbrook, OKC	29	198	6.8
Duhon, NYK	29	180	6.2

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-New England	10	5	0	.667	400	251
N.Y. Jets	8	7	0	.533	311	236
Miami	7	8	0	.467	336	360
Buffalo	5	10	0	.333	228	319
South						
x-Indianapolis	14	1	0	.933	409	277
Houston	8	7	0	.533	354	306
Jacksonville	7	8	0	.467	273	357
Tennessee	7	8	0	.467	337	389
North						
x-Cincinnati	10	5	0	.667	305	254
Baltimore	8	7	0	.533	370	248
Pittsburgh	8	7	0	.533	338	300
Cleveland	4	11	0	.267	222	358
West						
x-San Diego	12	3	0	.800	431	300
Denver	8	7	0	.533	302	280
Oakland	5	10	0	.333	184	358
Kansas City	3	12	0	.200	250	400

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

y-Philadelphia	11	4	0	.733	429	313
y-Dallas	10	5	0	.667	337	250
N.Y. Giants	8	7	0	.533	395	383
Washington	4	11	0	.267	246	313
South						
x-New Orleans	13	2	0	.867	500	318
Atlanta	8	7	0	.533	343	315
Carolina	7	8	0	.467	292	298
Tampa Bay	3	12	0	.200	234	380
North						
x-Minnesota	11	4	0	.733	426	305
y-Green Bay	10	5	0	.667	428	290
Chicago	6	9	0	.400	290	352
Detroit	2	13	0	.133	239	457
West						
x-Arizona	10	5	0	.667	368	292
San Francisco	7	8	0	.467	302	275
Seattle	5	10	0	.333	267	373
St. Louis	1	14	0	.067	169	408

x-clinched division
y-clinched playoff spot

Yesterday's Game

Chicago 36, Minnesota 30, OT

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOCAL SCORES

UBA STANDINGS

Ol'Aces	4	0
Advance	4	0
Prospect	3	2
Noni Saipan	2	2
Diamond	2	3
Hoopaholics	2	3
Cholos	1	4
Trinity	0	4

2009 Annual Christmas Island Relay

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Participants of Sunday's 2009 Annual Christmas Island Relay pose for a group photo at the Last Command Post.

Hoopaholics' James Lee, left, taps Peter Mendiola.

Jerry Diaz and Mamiko Oshima-Berger in a neck-and-neck race to Achugao.

Members of Team Butterfly celebrate at the finish line at the Last Command Post.

Butterfly's Fred Camacho cruises the 1,000 Curve Road heading to Lower Base.

Andres Buitrago smiles as he heads to the finish line.

Members of Hoopaholics pose for a group photo after the race at the Last Command Post.

The Patriots head to the finish line.

The Hangover crosses the finish line with the fifth best time.

Members of the 4 Princess and A Prince near the finish line.

Ellis, Warriors hold off Celtics, 103-99

Monta Ellis scored 37 points and converted two free throws with 2.3 seconds left, and the Golden State Warriors rallied from an early 18-point deficit to hand the Boston Celtics. **24**

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Rollers C slips past Hopwood Oldies

Rollers C posted the closest victory in Day 2 of the 2009 Annual Holiday Hoops after downing Hopwood Oldies, 31-28, yesterday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium. **25**

Docomo dethrones IT&E

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Docomo foiled IT& E's bid for a return trip to the finals, thumping its corporate rival in the battle for the last finals seat in the 2009 IT&E Inter Government/Business Basketball League on Monday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Docomo had a jackrabbit start in the do-or-die game en route to an 81-68 victory that advanced the team to the championship round against Department of Community and Cultural Affairs. The loss dethroned IT&E, which ruled the 2008 edition of the government/business caging after beating Autonomous in last year's finals.

IT&E started the game without its key players and that was all Docomo needed to blow the game wide open, leading at 36-10 after the first 10 minutes of the match.

Elmer Esdrelon and Bruce Berline came early for the game, which was originally set for 7:30pm. However, the Ada gym was not yet available, as teams in the Christmas caging were still playing. Esdrelon and Berline then went to the Garapan Basketball Court and suited up for Diamond Fixers in the UBA caging. They played the entire first quarter of the game in Garapan before returning to the Ada gym where the match kicked off past 8pm with Docomo comfortably in the driver's against the depleted IT&E.

Esdrelon and Berline started to contribute in the second half, but IT&E had already fallen into a deep hole and it simply did not have enough time and manpower to overhaul the lead.

Edsel Mendoza, who missed a couple of games in the playoffs, played in the crucial match, but IT&E was without gunner Ryan Sanciangco and frontliner Darwin Barbo.

Docomo led by as much as 34 points in the third period before IT&E made

See DOCOMO on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Docomo's Kelvin Fitial tries to barrel his away against IT&E's Bruce Berline during their do-or-die game in the government/business caging on Monday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Back-to-back for Hoopaholics, Prospects wins

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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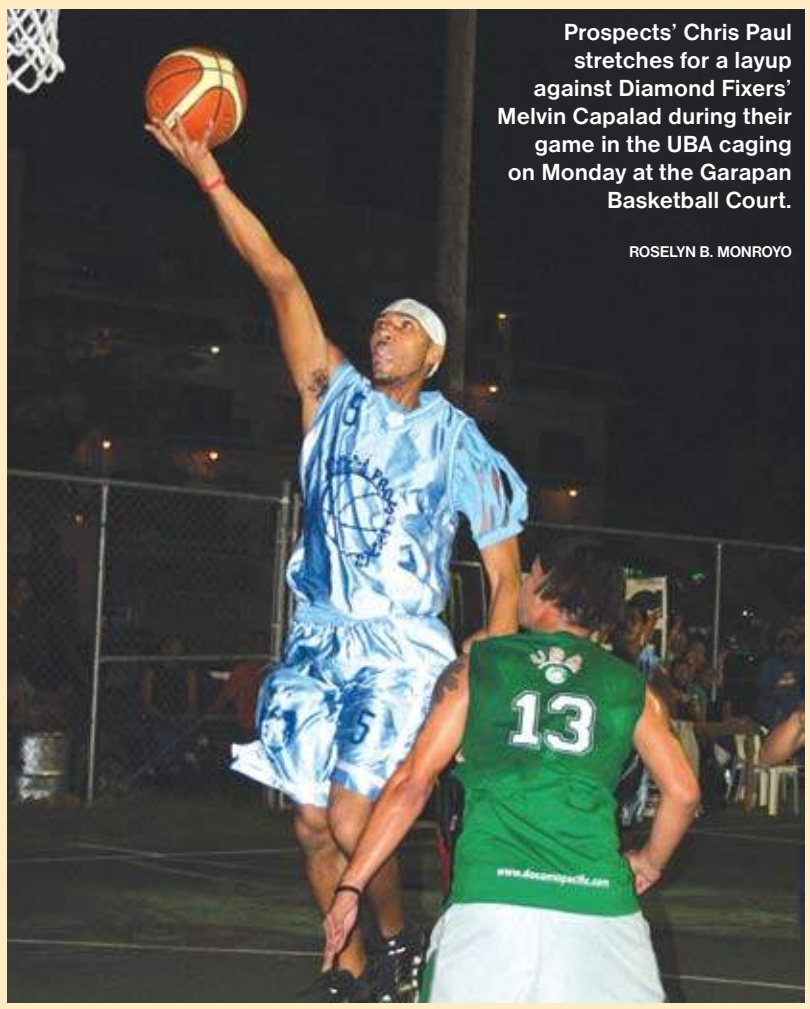
REPORTER

Hoopaholics notched their second straight win, while Prospects snapped its losing skid as they prevailed over separates foes in the Inaugural 2009 UBA/Miller Lite Men's Basketball League on Monday night at the Garapan Basketball Court.

Hoopaholics edged Cholos, 82-75, to follow up their 85-61 win over Trinity Estates last week, the former's first after a 0-3 start.

The Cholos-Hoopaholics game

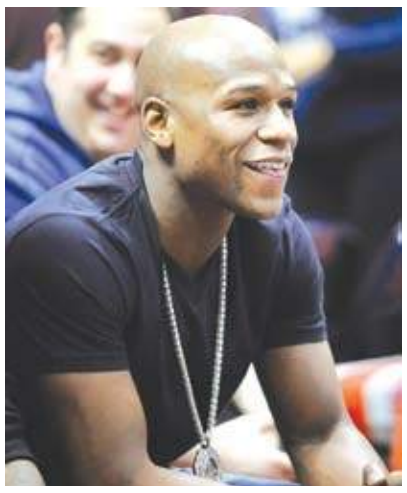
See BACK-TO-BACK on Page 26



Prospects' Chris Paul stretches for a layup against Diamond Fixers' Melvin Capalad during their game in the UBA caging on Monday at the Garapan Basketball Court.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Nevada orders urine tests for Pacquiao, Mayweather



TIM DAHLBERG
AP BOXING WRITER

LAS VEGAS (AP)— The head of the Nevada boxing commission ordered Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather Jr. to submit to urine tests Monday as a way of trying to break the impasse that has threatened to derail their proposed March 13 megafight.

Pacquiao and Mayweather must submit to the tests within 48 hours or face possible fines or suspension by the Nevada Athletic commission.

"That at least starts the ball rolling," said Keith Kizer, the commission's executive director.

Indeed, the two sides signaled late in the day that there could be room for a compromise after Mayweather's representatives said there was footage on HBO's "24/7" program that showed Pacquiao having blood taken 14 days before his knockout win over Ricky Hatton.

Mayweather's promoter, Richard Schaefer, said he was told that Top Rank representatives would be talking early Tuesday to Pacquiao in the

See NEVADA on Page 26

Secharmidal, Santos lead batting race

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

There is a two-way tie for the lead in the batting race in Chamolinian Softball Association's 2009 Budweiser Slow-pitch Softball League.

As of Dec. 18, Ur Balls' Oliver Secharmidal and Red Eye's Jose Santos are leading the 21-team league in batting average with the two sluggers posting an identical batting clip of .909.

Secharmidal went 10-for-11 at bat, scored five runs, two doubles, three homers, and 10 RBIs. Santos was also 10-for-11, made more runs with eight and fired one double, one triple, and three RBIs.

Oscar Sablan of league-leading Island Rebels is currently in third place with a batting average of .857, tying Freedom Air's Stanley Aldan. Both sluggers went 6-for-7 at the

See SECHARMIDAL on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Oliver Secharmidal, who plays outfield for Ur Balls, leads the Chamolinian league in the batting race.